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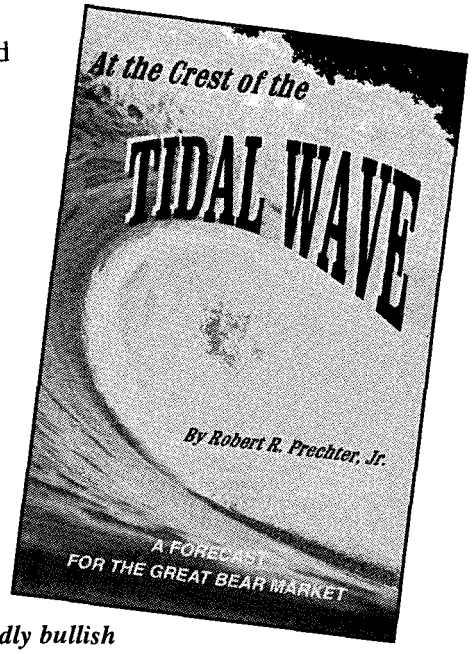

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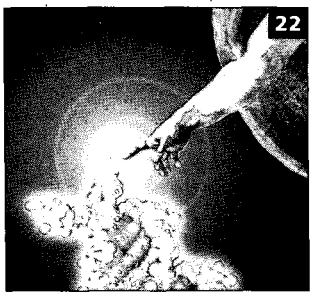
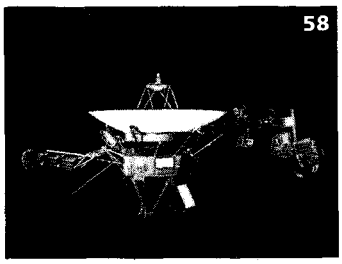
Free Minds and Free Markets®

July 1997/Vol. 29 No. 3





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REASON (ISSN 0048-6906) is published monthly except combined August/September issue by the Reason Foundation, a nonprofit, tax-exempt organization, 3415 S. Sepulveda Blvd., Suite 400, Los Angeles, CA 90034-6064. Periodicals postage paid at Los Angeles, CA, and additional mailing offices. **POSTMASTER:** Send address changes to Reason, P.O. Box 526, Mt. Morris, IL 61054.

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SUBSCRIPTIONS: $26 per year. Outside U.S. add $8/year surface, $55/year airmail. Address subscription correspondence to Reason, P.O. Box 526, Mt. Morris, IL 61054, 815-734-1102. For address change (allow six weeks), provide old address and new address, including zip code. **UNSOLICITED MANUSCRIPTS** returned only if accompanied by SASE. **INDEXED** in Readers' Guide to Periodical Literature, InfoTrac, Historical Abstracts, Political Science Abstracts, America: History and Life, Book Review Index, and P.A.I.S. Bulletin. Available on microfilm from University Microfilms International, 300 North Zeeb Rd., Dept. P.R., Ann Arbor, MI 48106. **Printed in the United States.**

Fatalist Attraction

The dubious case against fooling Mother Nature

By Virginia I. Postrel

Twenty years ago, the bookstore in which I was working closed for a few hours while we all went to the funeral of one of our colleagues. Herbie was a delightful guy, well liked by everyone. He died in his 20s—a ripe old age back then for someone with cystic fibrosis. In keeping with the family's wishes, we all contributed money in his memory to support research on the disease. In those days, the best hope was that scientists would develop a prenatal test that would identify fetuses likely to have C.F., allowing them to be aborted. The thought made us uncomfortable. "Would you really want Herbie never to be?" said my boss.

But science has a way of surprising us. Two decades later, abortion is no longer the answer proposed for cystic fibrosis. Gene therapy—the kind of audacious high-tech tool that generates countless references to *Brave New World* and *Frankenstein*—promises not to stamp out future Herbies but to cure them.

This spring I thought of Herbie for the first time in years. It was amid the brouhaha over cloning, as bioethicists galore were popping up on TV to demand that scientists justify their unnatural activities and Pat Buchanan was declaring that "mankind's got to control science, not the other way around."

It wasn't the technophobic fulminations of the anti-cloning pundits that brought back Herbie's memory, however. It was a letter from my husband's college roommate and his wife. Their 16-month-old son had been diagnosed with cystic fibrosis. He was doing fine now, they wrote, and they were optimistic about the progress of research on the disease.

There are no Herbies on *Crossfire*, and no babies with deadly diseases. There are only nature and technology, science and society, "ethics" and ambition. Our public debate about biotechnology is loud and impassioned but, most of all, abstract. Cowed by an intellectual culture that treats progress as a myth, widespread choice as an indulgence, and science as the source of atom bombs, even biotech's defenders rarely state their case in stark, personal terms. Its opponents, meanwhile, act as though medical advances are an evil, thrust upon us by scheming scientists. Hence Buchanan talks of "science" as distinct from "mankind" and ubiquitous Boston University bioethicist George Annas declares, "I want to put the burden of proof on scientists to show us why society needs this before society permits them to go ahead and [do] it."

That isn't, however, how medical science works. True, there are research biologists studying life for its own sake. But the advances that get bioethicists exercised spring not from pure science but from consumer demand: "Society" may not ask for them, but individual people do.

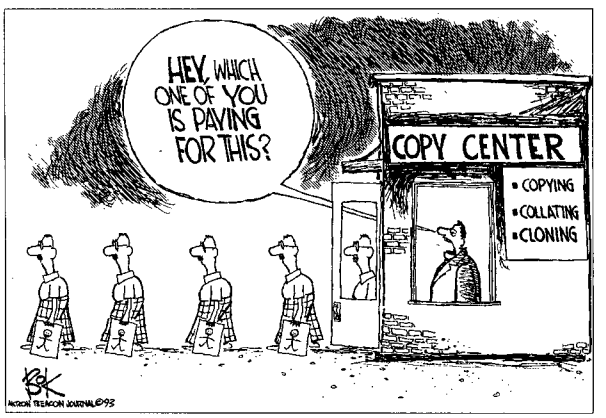
Living in a center of medical research, I am always struck by the people who appear on the local news, having just undergone this or that unprecedented medical procedure. They are all so ordinary, so down-to-earth. They are almost always middle-class, traditional families, people with big medical problems that require unusual solutions. They are not the Faustian, hedonistic yuppies you'd imagine from the way the pundits talk.

And it is the ambitions of such ordinary people, with yearnings as old as humanity—for children, for health, for a long and healthy life for their loved ones—of which the experts so profoundly disapprove. As we race toward what Greg Benford aptly calls "the biological century," we will hear plenty of warnings that we should not play God or fool Mother Nature. (See "Biology: 2001," November 1995.) We will hear the natural equated with the good, and fatalism lauded as maturity. That is a sentiment about which both green romantics and pious conservatives agree. And it deserves far more scrutiny than it usually gets.

Nobody wants to stand around and point a finger at this woman [who had a baby at 63] and say, 'You're immoral.' But generalize the practice and ask yourself, What does it really mean that we won't accept the life cycle or life course?" Leon Kass, the neocons' favorite bioethicist, told *The New York Times*. "That's one of the big problems of the contemporary scene. You've got all kinds of people who make a living and support themselves but who psychologically are not grown up. We have a culture of functional immaturity."

It sounds so profound, so wise, to denounce "functional immaturity" and set oneself up as a grown-up in a society of brats. But what exactly does it mean in this context? Kass can't possibly think that 63-year-olds will start flocking to fertility clinics—that was the quirky action of one determined woman. He is worried about something far more fundamental: our unwillingness to put up with whatever nature hands out, to accept our fates, to act our ages. "The good news," says Annas of human cloning, "is I think *finally we have a technology that we can all agree shouldn't be used.*" (Emphasis added.) Lots of biotech is bad, he implies, but it's so damned hard to get people to admit it.

When confronted with such



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310-391-2245 Fax: 310-391-4395
www.reasonmag.com

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1717 Pennsylvania Ave., NW, Suite 260
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202-955-1324 Fax: 202-955-3187

Advertising Sales
The Townsend Group, Inc.
7514 Wisconsin Ave., #350
Bethesda, MD 20814
301-215-6710 Fax: 301-215-7704

Circulation Service
P.O. Box 526
Mt. Morris, IL 61054
1-888-REASON-8
Reasonsubs@aol.com

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sentiments, we should remember just what Mother Nature looks like unmodified. Few biotechnophobes are as honest as British philosopher John Gray, who in a 1993 appeal for greens and conservatives to unite, wrote of "macabre high-tech medicine involving organ transplantation" and urged that we treat death as "a friend to be welcomed." Suffering is the human condition, he suggested: We should just lie back and accept it. "For millennia," he said, "people have been born, have suffered pain and illness, and have died, without those occurrences being understood as treatable diseases."

Gray's historical perspective is quite correct. In the good old days, rich men did not need divorce to dump their first wives for trophies. Childbirth and disease did the trick. In traditional societies, divorce, abandonment, annulment, concubinage, and polygamy—not high-tech medicine—were the cures for infertility. Until the 20th century, C.F. didn't need a separate diagnosis, since it was just one cause of infant mortality among many. Insulin treatment for diabetes (highly unnatural) didn't exist until the 1920s. My own grandmother saw her father, brother, and youngest sister die before she was in middle age. In 1964 a rubella epidemic left a cohort of American newborns deaf.

These days, we in rich countries have the wonderful luxury of rejecting even relatively minor ailments, from menstrual cramps to migraines, as unnecessary and treatable. "People had always suffered from allergies....But compared to the other health problems people faced before the middle of the twentieth century, the sneezing, itching, and skin eruptions had for the most part been looked at as a nuisance," writes biologist Edward Golub. "In the modern world, however, they became serious impediments to living a full life, and the discovery that a whole class of compounds called antihistamines could control the symptoms of allergy meant that allergic individuals could lead close to normal lives. The same story can be told for high blood pressure, depression, and a large number of chronic conditions."

Treating chronic conditions is, if anything, more nature-defiant than attacking infectious diseases. A woman doesn't have to have a baby when she's 63 to refuse to "accept the life cycle or life course." She can just take estrogen. And, sure enough, there is a steady drumbeat of criticism against such unnatural measures, as there is against such psychologically active drugs as Prozac. We should, say the critics, just take what nature gives us.

In large part, this attitude stems from a naive notion of health as the natural state of the body. In fact, disease and death are natural; the cures are artificial. And as we rocket toward the biological century, we will increasingly realize that a bodily state may not be a "disease," but just something we wish to change. Arceli Keh was not sick because her ovaries no longer generated eggs; she was simply past menopause. To say she should be able to defy her natural clock (while admitting that mid-60s parenthood may not be the world's greatest idea) doesn't mean declaring menopause a disease. Nor does taking estrogen, any more than taking birth control pills means fertility is a sickness.

"The cloned human would be an attack on the dignity and integrity of every single person on this earth," says German Research Minister Juergen Ruettgers, demanding a worldwide ban, lest such subhumans pollute the planet. (The Germans want to outlaw even the cloning of human cells for medical research.) Human cloning is an issue, but it is not *the* issue in these debates. They are really about whether centralized powers will wrest hold of scientists' freedom of inquiry and patients' freedom to choose—whether one set of experts will decide what is natural and proper for all of us—and whether, in fact, nature should be our standard of value.

Ruettgers is wildly overreacting and, in the process, attacking the humanity of people yet unborn. As Ron Bailey has noted in these pages, human cloning is not that scary, unless you're afraid of identical twins, nor does it pose unprecedented ethical problems. (See "The Twin Paradox," May.) No one has come up with a terribly plausible scenario of when human cloning might occur. Yet judging from the history of other medical technologies, the chances are good that if such a clone were created, the parents involved would be ordinary human beings with reasons both quite rare and extremely sympathetic. We should not let the arrogant likes of Ruettgers block their future hopes.

Blurred Vision

Seeing beyond government racial categories

By Nick Gillespie

In a provocative coincidence, golfer Tiger Woods—who, in reference to his mixed ethnic background, identifies himself as a "Cablinasian"—won the PGA Masters tournament just as the Office of Management and Budget began pondering whether to add a new "multiracial" category to government forms used in censuses, population surveys, and enforcing federal affirmative action programs.

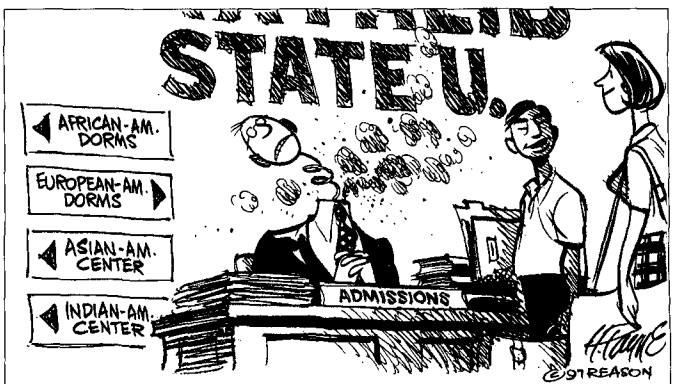
Since 1977, when the OMB last issued guidelines on the matter, all individuals have been assigned one of the following "racial classifications": American Indian or Alaskan native; Asian or Pacific Islander; Black; or White. An additional "ethnic classification" is also made: "Hispanic Origin" or "Not of Hispanic Origin." The current choices, notes a Census Bureau report, "have come under growing criticism from those who believe that the minimum set of categories no longer reflects the increasing racial and ethnic diversity of the Nation's population."

Proponents of adding a multiracial designation are absolutely correct that the current categories inadequately account for the tremendous diversity of contemporary America. They are, however, mistaken to think that much—if any—good can come from a more precise accounting by government of "racial" demographics. Even without reference to Nazi Germany or apartheid South Africa, our own twisted history on the matter makes clear that governments should be discouraged from recording such information at all. Indeed, because racial classifications seek to fix forever one's identity through blood and birth, they are particularly appalling in a country whose ideals include the ability to continually remake, redefine, and reinvent oneself.

This is the great tragedy, the original sin of American history: Even as our country, relatively free of the inherited social, political, and economic strictures found throughout most of history and human society, has granted people unparalleled opportunity to pursue their talents, it has been obsessed with limiting individuals through racial identification.

The "one-drop rule" that evolved in the South was used to restrict a person's chances for life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness. In the late 19th century, racial classifications were used not merely to curtail emigration from China and Japan, but to deny those immigrants and their children property and marriage rights ("yellow" men were even barred from sleeping with "white" prostitutes throughout most of the West). In the 1920s, country-of-origin quotas were used essentially to end the influx of genetically "inferior" immigrants from southern and central Europe. ("The primary reason for the restriction of the alien stream," said one approving congressman, "is the necessity for purifying and keeping pure the blood of America.")

Today, of course, racial information is used for "enlightened" purposes—tracking minority employment and school enrollments, granting government contracts, ensuring voting rights, and the like—that are supposed to end the necessity for such information in the first place. But because racial classifications are predicated upon the notion of a fixed, immutable identity, they necessarily perpetuate divisive racial categories, regardless of how they are used.



"WHEN I TOLD HIM I'M 1/4 AFRICAN-AMERICAN, 1/4 ITALIAN-AMERICAN, 1/4 THAI-AMERICAN, AND 1/4 INDIAN-AMERICAN HE BLEW A FUSE."

HENRY PAYNE

Interestingly, opponents of the multiracial classification acknowledge that official racial categories are designed to maintain strict boundaries, to prevent one group from blending into another; in fact, that point underlies their opposition to the new multiracial designation. Letting individuals opt out of the current categories, Congressional Black Caucus Chairwoman Maxine Waters (D-Calif.) told *Time*, "just blurs everything."

But whether official data reflect it, our society is already a transracial blur. Consider Tiger Woods, whose neologistic self-description refers to the fact that he is part white, part black, part American Indian, part Thai, and part Chinese. While he provides a particularly dramatic illustration, he nevertheless embodies a steadily growing trend. During the past two decades, the number of children from interracial marriages grew from around 500,000 to over 2 million; the percentage of African Americans marrying whites has roughly quadrupled.

More to the point, most blacks and many American Indians have white ancestors; similarly, an appreciable number of whites share minority blood as well. And, as even casual students of American history know, "whites" are hardly a stable group: Earlier in this century, for instance, Jewish, Italian, and Slavic Americans were excluded from the category.

The "blurring" of ostensibly rigid categories, of course, has always been the great fear of racial classifiers. But the potential to do just that remains at the heart of what is distinctive about the United States.

In 1782, even before there was a proper United States, Jean de Crèvecouer asked famously, in *Letters from an American Farmer*, "What then is the American, this new man?" His answer: "He is either a European, or the descendant of a European, hence that strange mixture of blood, which you will find in no other country. I could point out to you a family whose grandfather was an Englishman, whose wife was Dutch, whose son married a Frenchwoman, and whose...four sons

have four wives of different nations. *He* is an American, who, leaving behind him all his ancient prejudices and manners, receives new ones from the new mode of life he has embraced."

To be sure, Crèvecouer's formulation has significant (and telling) blind spots, some borne of the time he was writing, others not so readily dismissed (he himself owned black slaves for a time). But certainly it suggests one of the more laudable impulses in American history, the desire to obliterate inherited position and to leave behind "blood" as the chief determinant of identity and status.

Similarly, we should embrace "multiracial" not as a box on a government form but as a shared social and historical reality, one that unites rather than divides us. In doing so, it may become easier to deliver on the promise of America by finally transcending our obsession with race.

Fiddling with Foster Care

The feds want to play, too.

By Michael W. Lynch

One doesn't have to spend much time in Washington to discover that our governing elite comprises many people who are more interested in favorable media mentions than in policy that actually addresses a problem. This is particularly true when it comes to children. And no group, except perhaps the tobacco industry, fears negative public perceptions more than the once revolutionary Republicans who still nominally control Congress. The confluence of these two factors promises to give Americans federally driven foster care reform.

America's foster care system is certainly a mess. A half million children were wards of the state in 1995, up from 400,000 children five years earlier. Four in 10 of these children can expect to remain in foster care for more than two years; many will experience multiple placements. Worse yet, while 120,000 children were free to be adopted at the end of 1990, the last year for which data are available, only 17,000 adoptions were completed. Meanwhile, organizations that specialize in private adoptions, such as Adopt a Special Kid America, have waiting lists of frustrated couples eager to provide nurturing homes.

Last December President Clinton, citing such statistics, called for a doubling of adoptions by 2002. This, in turn, has prompted a burst of bipartisan legislation. In late April, the Adoption Promotion Act of 1997, sponsored by Reps. David Camp (R-Mich.) and Barbara Kennelly (D-Conn.), passed the House in a 416–5 landslide and is expected to emerge in the Senate in July. In addition, Sens. John Chafee (R-R.I.) and Jay Rockefeller (D-W.Va.) have introduced the Safe Adoptions and Family Environment (SAFE) Act.

These bills, while not noxious, indicate how little the federal government can do to solve some of the nation's intractable problems. They also demonstrate how far the Republican Congress, which once professed to recognize this limitation, has regressed from its devolutionary rhetoric of 1992. (See "Spinal Tap," April.) Instead of increasing its role in foster care, the federal government, short of getting out of the child welfare business altogether, should block-grant the money to the states with very few, if any, strings attached. This happens to be the approach the Republicans took in 1996.

Consider the legislation's goals. Both bills aim to increase adoption and clarify what "reasonable efforts" must be made in pursuit of family preservation.

There is rightfully a pro-family bias in family law. When in doubt, social service agencies attempt to preserve families. This was made explicit in a 1980 law that required states to make reasonable efforts to preserve families before terminating parental rights. Critics of the system complain that agencies have misinterpreted this statute to mean that they must go to extraordinary lengths to restore families. This pro-family bias, critics charge, means that kids languish in foster care longer than they should and often are returned to violent homes where they are further abused.

The bills attempt to address this by clarifying what "reasonable efforts" means and by shortening from 18 to 12 months the time social workers and judges have to design a long-term plan for the child. In addition, the Camp-Kennelly bill attempts to bribe state officials into focusing on adoption with a $4,000–$6,000 bonus for each child adopted.

But there is a trade-off. The converse of making every effort to reunify a family is rushing to break up families whose only crime is offending someone who made an anonymous tip. The Home School Legal Defense Association is fending off four to five such intrusions on its members a week.

In other words, there are two types of errors the system can make: failing to remove a child from an abusive home and removing a child from a nonabusive home. The challenge is to create a system that strikes an acceptable balance between these two errors.

The states, which actually run or directly oversee foster care programs, are better suited than the feds to make these tradeoffs. Consider the 12-month cutoff provision. Eighteen states already have adopted this time frame. Two states have shortened it to six months, and six states require a hearing within 18 months. Even in the absence of federal direction, states often do address their problems. It doesn't, however, follow that the other 24 states a) suffer from the same problems as the states which have adjusted their laws or b) should have to adopt the same policies even if they do.

As far as adoption in concerned, it is hard to see how a $6,000 payment overwhelms all the other federal money that comes from keeping a child in foster care: monthly payments ranging from $200 to $3,000 to caretakers and separate funding for family preservation programs. The state of Kansas recently privatized its entire system, adopting a managed care model under which private providers are paid a one-time fee per child regardless of how long the child stays in out-of-home

care. In just six months, adoptions have increased by 80 percent. If states had a lump sum of money, rather than an endless stream of federal dollars attached to children in foster care, they would quickly come to their own conclusion on what constitutes "reasonable efforts."

The promise isn't that each state will develop a perfect system. That won't happen. Given the tragedies the system exists to address—drug-addicted mothers, sexually abused children, etc.—a perfect system is unimaginable.

Rather, the case for block grants rests on three pillars: First, the states, which actually run the systems, are better situated to recognize the children's needs. Second, since state officials must deal directly with the fallout from the system's failure, they have a greater stake in the outcomes than any Washingtonian, no matter how compassionate. And third, freed from federal regulations on how they must spend their money, state bureaucrats would lose their favorite excuse for failure: The federal government tells us how to spend our money. Suddenly, state officials would be accountable for outcomes. Accountability improving outcomes—that is something conservatives once championed.

REASON News

■ Congratulations to Chip Bok, who was a finalist for the Pulitzer Prize for Editorial Cartooning, in recognition of his "originality, editorial effectiveness, quality of drawing and pictorial effect." Check out his latest on p. 18.

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■ REASON subscribers should have received a request for finanical support in mid-May. Unlike most magazines of ideas, REASON is not supported by a wealthy patron; we depend on your generosity to continue operations, expand circulation, and add such services as *Reason Online* (www.reasonmag.com). Please give generously. Thank you.

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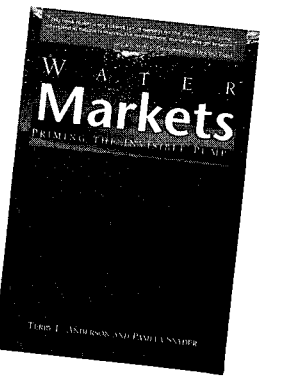

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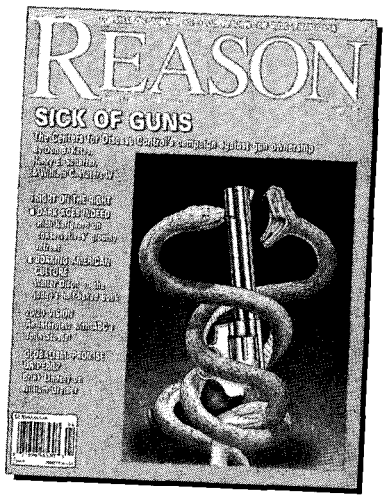

Guns, Health, and Truth

What Don B. Kates, Henry E. Schaffer, and William C. Waters IV revealed about the Centers for Disease Control's holy war on guns in "Public Health Pot Shots" (April) rings true.

Just as fiction requires suspension of disbelief, medical-social activism requires suspension of scientific ethics. I have repeatedly brought the same criminology research the authors cite to the attention of medical society boards of directors and medical journal editors.

Usually these gatekeepers of medical knowledge fabricate some reason to exclude the evidence from discussion. In other cases they simply suppress it. An example is the California Medical Association's 1995 White Paper on Violence, in which a policy committee of physicians admitted, "Violence is a wide-ranging issue that has been studied by a number of disciplines (e.g., sociology and criminology). The [committee], however, limited itself to looking at violence as a public health issue and considered items primarily from the medical literature, which is by no means exhaustive."

The same committee had two years earlier refused to examine criminologists' gun research findings on the pretext that they were not peer-reviewed by physicians. One wonders if this committee of doctors would be equally sanguine about criminologists reviewing scholarly papers on open-heart surgery.

Timothy Wheeler, M.D.
Director, Doctors for Responsible Gun Ownership
The Claremont Institute
Upland, CA

Hoodwinking the Voters

Regarding "Drug Test" by Nick Gillespie (April) and its poll of congressional members from Arizona and California on the medical marijuana issue: I found the responses to your second question very interesting. ("Opponents of medical marijuana measures such as Drug Czar Barry McCaffrey and Arizona Sen. Jon Kyl have claimed that voters were 'asleep at the switch' and 'hoodwinked.' Do you think voters of your state were incompetent in passing this law?") Nine representatives answered yes.

Both propositions were available to be read by any interested party, and it would have been little trouble to find out every last detail of what these initiatives meant. They passed with fairly good percentages of the vote. The citizens of California and Arizona finally had something of substance to vote on, and they did what intelligent people do: They made a decision based on facts.

When it comes to voting for a representative, however, it would be extremely difficult to find out what the representative had taken a stand on in the past and impossible to predict what he would do in the future. All those who said yes to your question should take a hike, because they don't give the voters enough information to make an intelligent decision. If there was any hoodwinking going on, we should look at our elected officials first.

Mark Walker
Burlington, KY

Benevolent Disagreement

Like Loren Lomasky, I am a great admirer of Judith Martin, whose new book he reviewed along with my *Unrugged Individualism* ("Nice Distinction," April). Miss Manners would doubtless be too gracious to protest the kind of criticism Lomasky directed at me. But having been raised in the rough-and-tumble world of academic philosophy, I have no such qualms.

My book was an effort to show that benevolence has an egoistic basis, that treating others benevolently is not a sacrifice of our interests but a way of advancing them. Lomasky argues that my effort failed because benevolence simply means giving others more than is necessary to get what one wants in trade.

But his argument rests on a pair of what philosophers call persuasive definitions: definitions that incorporate the conclusion one is trying to establish. Defining self-interest as economic gain, and benevolence as the willingness to forgo such gain, Lomasky leaves himself a pretty short step to the conclusion that benevolence is not in our interest. But these definitions, which he does nothing to justify, are at odds with the Objectivist analysis of self-interest and benevolence that I developed in the book.

I cannot reproduce those analyses in a letter, but even a casual reader of Ayn Rand must know that Objectivists do not equate self-interest with economic gain. Self-interest includes "the terms, methods, conditions, and goals required for the survival of a rational being through the whole of his lifespan" (in Rand's formulation), including such values as enduring personal relationships and such virtues as integrity and justice. Nor is this conception of self-interest a stipulation; it is grounded in Rand's analysis of value.

On a related front, Lomasky criticizes

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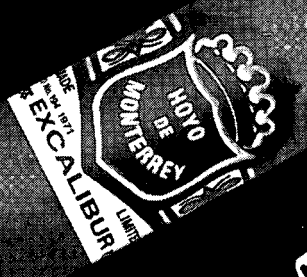

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me for confusing benevolence and justice (a distinction I took considerable pains to draw in the book), citing my definition of benevolence as "the commitment to achieving the values derivable from other people in society by treating them as potential trading partners." Living by trade rather than plunder, he argues, is the virtue of justice, not benevolence. I agree.

But benevolence goes beyond mere respect for rights; it means projecting ways to exploit the positive potential represented by other people. Justice is exercised in evaluating and complying with the terms of *actual* trades; benevolence in the openness to *possible* trades and to the potential of others to enrich our lives.

Finally, among all the forms and occasions of benevolence that I discuss, Lomasky takes exception to my analysis of why it is in our interest to help others in emergencies, like stopping for a stranded motorist. This is a complicated problem, which I do not claim to have solved completely. But it won't be solved with a tunnel-vision conception of self-interest in terms of concrete, range-of-the-moment benefits, as reflected in Lomasky's statement that "the egoist will be pleased if others stop when her car breaks down, but if she's rational she will not stop for someone else."

A rational egoist knows that help is not likely to be forthcoming when he needs it unless there is a general social practice of providing such help. And so, not thinking it rational to count on luck, he will consider whether there is anything he can do to promote this general practice. The answer, contrary to Lomasky, is *yes.* A general social practice is sustained by the acts of individuals, each of whom sets an example for others. The probability is vanishingly small that I will set an example, through my benevolence, for the very people who may someday be in a position to help me.

But that is not the point. The trade I engage in is not with those particular individuals; it is with everyone else in my society. It is a kind of informal insurance policy against unexpected risks, mediated by custom rather than contract.

These considerations do not solve the Prisoner's Dilemma problem that Lomasky poses. But without the narrow conception of self-interest on which he relies, it is not clear how significant that problem is.

David Kelley
Executive Director
Institute for Objectivist Studies
Poughkeepsie, NY

In his interesting review of David Kelley's booklet on benevolence, Loren Lomasky is too sweeping when he suggests that Randians, as a breed, are rude as a matter of course. A brief check of Internet discussion groups will confirm that rudeness as a trait of ideological zealots is not specific to Objectivists. It should also be conceded that much has changed in the Objectivist movement over the past 30 years, for the better.

Lomasky seems to assert that a policy of benevolence cannot spring from a policy of self-interest, and, further, that self-interestedness as such cannot encompass anything more than narrow calculations of the moment. But why? Everyone is conscious at some level of how he treats others, and habitual incivility or discourtesy toward others must have a negative effect on his own character and on the willingness of others to deal with and befriend him. Otherwise the rest of us would not be shying away from dyspeptic Randroids. Certainly, a person may pursue his self-interest in ways that do not actually achieve his self-interest and well-being; what he should do instead, then, is pursue it in a better way.

When Lomasky merely equates altruism and benevolence, he muddies the waters. An altruistic defense of virtue must founder because it treats the well-being of the morally choosing individual as either irrelevant, or subordinate to the needs of others.

Under altruism, for a given ethical actor the goal of ethics becomes severed from the goal of the actor's own life. If others come first, when and by what criterion is an individual ever entitled to look to his own needs? Usually, the resolution is a tacit détente between altruistic sentiment and self-interested reality. But this is an unstable détente and does not provide any definite guidance in actually living a life.

David M. Brown
New York, NY

Loren Lomasky replies: David Brown correctly observes that a taste for Rand is neither a necessary nor a sufficient condition for bursts of rudeness. And, indeed, the preceding responses to my critique of *Unrugged Individualism* are impeccably civil. They do not, however, render any less Procrustean the task of trimming Objectivist ethics to mesh with benevolence.

David Kelley observes that Objectivism does not equate self-interest with economic gain. I have no reason to maintain otherwise, as a description either of Objectivism or of the good life. Any such straitened view of what it is to live well is too desiccated for human consumption. That is precisely why I find curious Kelley's persistence in attempting to limn an account of benevolence in terms of potential opportunities for trade. Hasn't he just agreed that the moral life is wider than that? Benevolence is one such wider dimension insofar as its essence is provision of benefits to others out of a primary concern for their interest, and doing so without insistence on receiving a quid for each quo tendered.

At one point in his letter Kelley seems to say that this characterization is an arbitrary piece of persuasive definition and thus disposable as a merely semantic quibble. But that proves not to be his settled view, for he acknowledges that a society in which many people regularly provide small, unreciprocated kindnesses to others is abundantly more congenial than one in which they do not. That's benevolence. Kelley cannot quite abide it but neither is he willing to discard it, and so it is at this stretch of the argument that his philosophical wheels spin.

Perhaps, he suggests, one's acts of kindness will set a general example that redounds to one's own benefit. Or they are a kind of "insurance policy" taken out to guard against risk. For reasons set out in the review, these attempts to reduce benevolence to enlightened prudence cannot succeed.

Kelley semi-concedes the point when he admits that his remarks do not surmount Prisoner's Dilemma problems but suggests that these problems might not be severe given a sufficiently wide understanding of self-interest.

David Brown deplores my equation of

benevolence with altruism. This, I protest, is an overly extravagant reading between the lines. I cannot see where I equate benevolence, or anything else, with altruism. The latter is not a concept for which I've ever had much use.

In this disregard I am not alone. Altruism understood in Brown's terms as self-abnegation practiced by sacrificial detachment from one's own projects and well-being is virtually nonexistent in the philosophical literature—other, that is, than in the fulminations of Objectivists. It is a straw man, one given life by Rand's dramatized self-portrayals of her distinctness and agonistic struggle against the rest of the philosophical tradition.

Concerning those predecessors, however, Rand possessed a store of spectacular misconceptions. In fact, only with Aristotle does her understanding rise to the level of plausible misunderstanding. I say this as much with awe as accusation, for it is amazing how little inconvenienced she was by these oceans of ignorance and prejudice. That may be because Rand was an imaginative genius able to produce riveting critiques of works she had never bothered to read. But emulating this example has proven intellectually deadly to many of her followers.

Those who most closely hew to her excoriations of so-called altruism and refuse to wander away from the confining egoistic circle she has drawn have imposed on themselves an irrelevance within the greater philosophical world. To his credit, David Kelley valiantly attempts in *Unrugged Individualism* to expand that circle. But until he is willing to toss overboard more of Objectivist orthodoxy and to regard Rand as simply one philosopher among others, it will continue to confine his investigations.

Needless to say, these remarks are offered in a spirit of exquisite politeness and, yes, exemplary benevolence!

CORRECTIONS

- In "Sources" (Citings, May), the Web address of REASON's story on DARE was misstated. The correct address is www.reasonmag.com/9503/fe.DARE.text.html.
- In "Change Reaction," (April), the number of pages and price of *Thought Contagion* by Aaron Lynch were misstated. The page count is 192 and the price is $24.

We're Not Worthy

Thanks but no thanks for the patronizing review of *Radical Son* ("Desperately Seeking David") in your March issue. With friends like this, who needs enemies?

The idea that the war with the left is over (hence my book and my life are pathetic anachronisms that needn't bother the truly enlightened) is laughable. It is also insulting to Ward Connerly, Newt Gingrich, me, and others who—because we are in the battle—live with constant death threats from this left and are subject to daily character assassinations in the mainstream media and from the university culture that the left still owns (or has review author Steve Hayward even bothered to visit a campus lately?). If the left is passé, how come racial preference systems still rule the land?

The power of the left is manifest in the fact that, after 25 years of being mostly right about the big issues, REASON remains a marginal publication, its editors and writers obscure nobodies in the literary culture, and major thinkers like Hayek and Mises are incomprehensible names for 99 percent of the graduates of our elite universities. At the same time, brain-dead socialists like bell hooks, Cornel West, Catharine MacKinnon, and Noam Chomsky occupy chairs at premier universities and are cultural celebrities and hallowed icons for the same students.

Radical Son—which is the only description of the left from the inside over the past five decades—explains why this is so and provides a unique arsenal with which to fight back. Too bad for Steve Hayward that he doesn't think this makes *Radical Son* a socially relevant document.

Finally, let me say I'm sorry for Hayward that the personal story recounted in my autobiography embarrasses him and that he would rather pretend it didn't exist. It occurs to me, however, that it is just this kind of reaction to the human experience that gives conservatives a bad name.

David Horowitz
President
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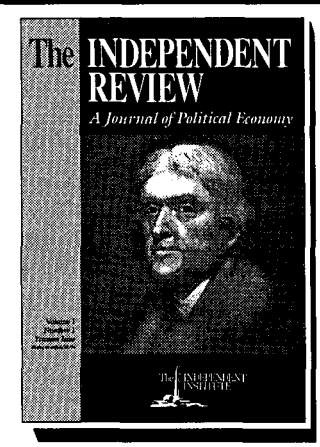

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No Business Like Home Business

By Brian Doherty

Sen. Kit Bond (R-Miss.), chairman of the Senate Committee on Small Business, has proposed a bill he calls the Home-Based Business Fairness Act. The measure would give home offices full tax deductibility for expenses (currently tough to get from a picayune IRS if any aspect of your business is conducted outside your home office); allow the self-employed to deduct 100 percent of their health care expenses; and simplify the definition of "independent contractor" while ending the IRS practice of retroactively classifying them as employees, with concomitant back-tax penalties.

Currently, about 9 million Americans run businesses from their homes, and their numbers are increasing by roughly 20 percent a year. Almost three-quarters of home-based businesses are run by women.

The bill will be under consideration this congressional session from the full Finance Committee, three members of whom are co-sponsors of the bill. An identical House bill has also been proposed, sponsored by two Republicans from Missouri, Reps. Jim Talent and Joanne Emerson.

The bill is estimated to cost the government $8.3 billion, making it one of the cheapest tax cuts on the table, says Small Business Committee spokesman Kenneth Bricker. It's also, Bricker says, one of the hardest to attack as a "tax cut for the rich."

Feckless FEC

By Steven Hayward and Allison Hayward

The U.S. 4th Circuit Court of Appeals has dealt another body blow to the Federal Election Commission's crusade to regulate political speech. (See "Gagging on Political Reform," October 1996.) On April 7, the court said the FEC must pay a group's legal costs because the agency did not prosecute it in good faith.

Following the 1992 election, the FEC brought suit against the Christian Action Network, which had run TV ads identifying then-candidate Bill Clinton as "pro-homosexual" and inviting viewers to phone for more information. An incorporated nonprofit organization, CAN could not legally campaign for a federal candidate. The FEC charged that the group's commercials amounted to either an "independent expenditure" or an "in-kind" contribution to Bush's campaign—either of which would be an illegal corporate expenditure.

Though the ads stopped short of using prohibited "express advocacy" terms such as "vote for" or "support," the FEC charged that the sounds and images in the ads constituted express advocacy and should be subject to regulation. In other words, no words of advocacy would necessarily be required to constitute "express advocacy."

The 4th Circuit Court laughed this novel interpretation out of court last year, castigating the FEC severely for ignoring 20 years of case law on this issue. "It would be inappropriate for us," the court noted wryly, "to even inquire whether the identification of a candidate as pro homosexual constitutes advocacy for, or against, that candidate."

Balance Sheet

By Rick Henderson

ASSETS

△ **Reformers' Revenge.** Ralph Nader's Public Citizen, which constantly hectors for tougher campaign finance laws, finds itself under Federal Elections Commission scrutiny. (See "Gagging on Political Reform," Oct.) The FEC alleges that Public Citizen's 1992 "Boot Newt" ad campaign was no "independent expenditure," but was illegally coordinated with Gingrich's Democratic opponent, Herman Clark.

△ **Prof Pay.** Another sign that private colleges respond to market pressures: Faculty salary inflation is falling. (See "No Class," May.) The College and University Personnel Association's annual survey shows salaries at private schools rising by 2.5 percent this academic year, less than half of the 6.1 percent increase at public colleges. The mean private school salary is $48,850, 5 percent less than the mean for state-run schools.

△ **Code Green.** Encryption pioneer Phil Zimmermann cashes in on his notoriety. The FBI tried to nail Zimmermann for violating "munitions export" laws when he posted his Pretty Good Privacy data-scrambling software on the Internet. When the feds abandoned their case last year, Zimmermann lined up investors. *Forbes* reports his company, PGP Inc., raised $8 million in venture capital in 1996 and may get another $15 million this year. PGP may soon be bundled with Lotus's cc:Mail e-mail software.

△ **Grain Hysteria.** The perpetually pessimistic Worldwatch Institute says China will import 200 million tons of grain a year by 2030, about 40 percent of its current consumption. Not so fast, says the International Food Policy Research Institute. The IFPRI predicts China will start *exporting* grain by 2020. A more prosperous China can take advantage of technologies that produce more food on less land. Over the next 30 years, Harvard agricultural economist Robert Paarlberg tells *Science*, most experts expect China's grain production to increase by 60 to 90 percent.

Ants in the Belfry

By Nick Gillespie

"We might rely on collectivism to produce goods that we don't really need and goods we have a lot of substitutes for; but those things that we must have—that we cannot live without, at least in the manner in which we choose to live—those things have got to be reserved for private production, not government production." So wrote Sen. Phil Gramm (R-Tex.), then an economics professor at Texas A&M, in a 1978 REASON article.

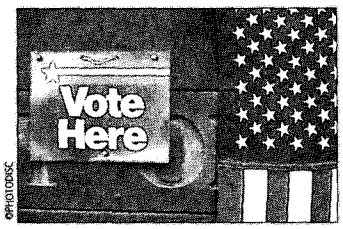
More recently, Gramm has decided that one thing we

▼ Communication Breakdown. Barring further retirements or resignations, Bill Clinton will choose two new members of the Federal Communications Commission. The leading candidate for the designated Democrat seat: Senate staffer Christopher McLean, author of the Communications Decency Act, currently under review by the Supreme Court.

▼ Joint Jerk. Direct democracy be damned: The crackdown against medical marijuana is under way. Federal agents seize 331 pot plants, growing equipment, and financial records from Flower Therapy, a patient buyer's club in San Francisco. And the Arizona legislature passes a bill requiring the FDA to approve any illegal drug before it can be prescribed. (Surprise: Marijuana isn't FDA-approved.)

▼ Priced Out. After intense lobbying by left-leaning groups, Bill Clinton nixes a commission that would consider revising the overstated, antediluvian Consumer Price Index. (See "Priced to Move," Feb.) Among the culprits: such tax-grabbers as the AARP, the AFL-CIO, the American Federation of Federal, State, County, and Municipal Employees, and the National Committee to Preserve Social Security and Medicare.

▼ Campaign Chaos! The Supreme Court says states can prohibit "fusion" politics—the ballot practice of listing a single candidate's name on more than one party line. (See "Fusion Energy," Apr.) Writing for the 6–3 majority, Chief Justice William Rehnquist says giving candidates multiple party listings could promote "election- and campaign-related disorder." *Bad* voters. Go to your booths.



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must have and cannot live without—but that the federal government should produce—is a national policy on fire ants, a pest that attacks people, animals, and crops and infests over 60 percent of Texas counties and large parts of the South. Gramm has sponsored the "Fire Ant Control, Management, and Eradication Act of 1997," a bill that would establish a "National Advisory Board" on fire ants and spend as much as $16 million over four years to rub out the insects.

"Since I started studying the fire ants issue, I see them everywhere. I had a dream the other night they were conspiring to kill me," Gramm told the Associated Press. "Fire ants have reached a point of disruption in everything—from agriculture to playgrounds—that we need to do something about it."

Gain for "No Pain"

By Brian Doherty

Opiophobia—the fear of painkillers—has created lots of grief for both patients and doctors. (See "No Relief in Sight," January.) A new animal study by a Tufts University anesthesiologist provides evidence that the fear of creating drug dependence or tolerance is keeping patients in pain unnecessarily. In a study involving rats, Dr. Stuart Dunbar found that steady doses of narcotics are better for pain relief than the common practice of giving short doses of painkillers and then waiting for the pain to become severe before giving another dose.

While Dunbar stresses that his research cannot at this point be definitively extrapolated to humans, his work suggests that the conventional approach of creating drug-free periods may make patients even more sensitive to pain.

Educating Arizona

By Michael W. Lynch

The education establishment has long championed policies to lower teacher-to-student ratios. But when the Arizona legislature came up with a plan that may accomplish just that, the Arizona Education Association, the state's largest teachers' union, didn't applaud—it threatened to sue.

In April, Arizona lawmakers passed a law that allows residents to deduct up to $500 from their tax bill for donations made to tuition scholarship programs. Eligible organizations are nonprofits that give children scholarships to attend the school of their choice. The measure also allows taxpayers to write off up to $200 for donations made to public schools for extracurricular activities.

"We think this is a voucher [plan] in disguise," says AEA President Kay Lybeck. "But I must admit that it is well written and it ▶

SOURCES

If you're a working economist, or just an interested layman wanting to keep up with the cutting edge of the dismal science, the *Economics Working Paper* Archive (**http://econwpa.wustl.edu**) of St. Louis's Washington University is a treasure chest. The site features abstracts of hundreds of unpublished working papers by economists around the world; full papers are available for those with PostScript or Acrobat document readers (available for free on the World Wide Web). The 22 subject categories include currently hot areas such as experimental economics, game theory, and law and economics, as well as older favorites such as international finance and economic history.

The FBI Laboratory: An Investigation into Laboratory Practices and Alleged Misconduct in Explosives-Related and Other Cases, a report by the Department of Justice Office of the Inspector General, is available on the World Wide Web (**http://www.usdoj.gov/oig/fbilab1/fbil1toc.htm**). The investigation, the result of accusations made by FBI scientist Frederic Whitehurst, examines the bureau's forensic procedures in the Oklahoma City bombing, the World Trade Center bombing, and a number of other high-profile cases. The result is a riveting, exhaustive, and familiar tale of bureaucratic bungling. "We did not," the investigators conclude in part, "substantiate the vast majority of...the allegations made by Whitehurst....We found, however, significant instances of testimonial errors, substandard analytical work, and deficient practices."

Two new free electronic resources are available for F.A. Hayek buffs. The first is a searchable archive of Hayek-related scholarship (**http://maelstrom.stjohns.edu/archives/hayek-l.html**). The second is a listserv dedicated to scholarly discussions of the Nobel prize winner's legacy (to sign up, e-mail the message **SUBSCRIBE Hayek-L <your first name><your last name>** to **LISTSERV@maelstrom.stjohns.edu**).

BRICKBATS

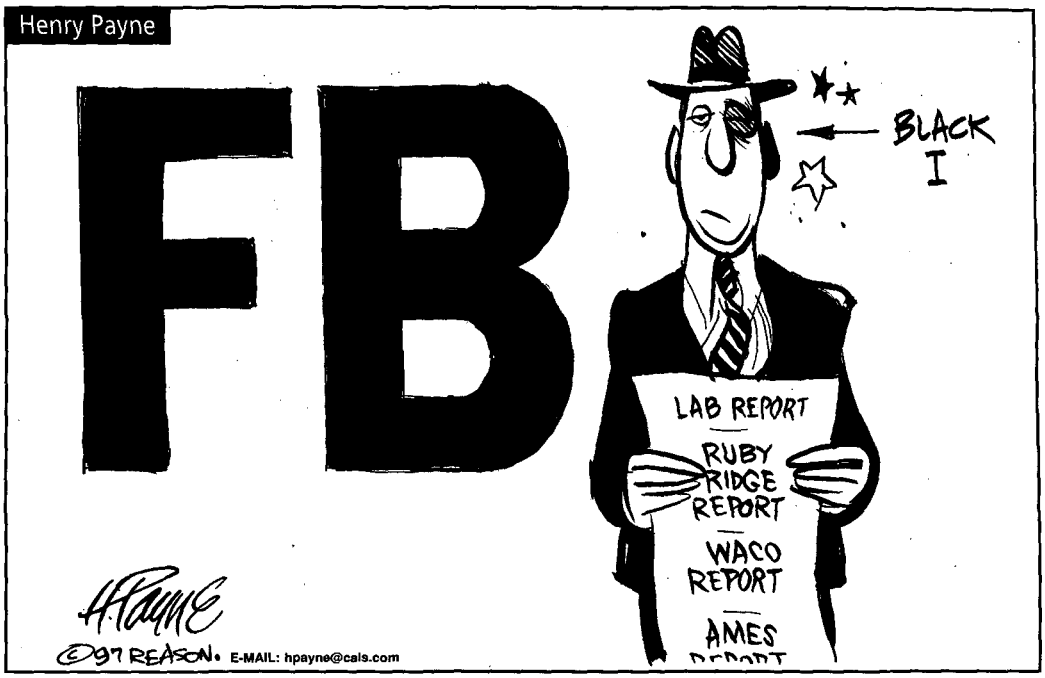
◆ Pamela Damon had a $1,200 tax refund coming to her. So she called the IRS to find out why it hadn't arrived. Can't send it, said the agency, you've been dead 26 years. Of course, that begs the question of how she paid taxes to begin with. Still, the IRS refused to send her refund until she proved her existence. Must've been a computer error, said the IRS, after she proved her point.

◆ The IRS has spent $4 billion over the past few years upgrading its computers, but obviously that hasn't helped. In fact, in a report to Congress, the agency admitted that the computers "do not work in the real world." So now the IRS is contemplating hiring a private firm to come in and process tax returns.

◆ A judge has thrown out Clifford Goldberg's $7 million lawsuit. Goldberg claimed that he lost his hearing after attending a particularly loud Mötley Crüe concert. The judge said Goldberg assumed the risk when he attended what he knew would be a raucous concert. Besides, anyone who thinks Mötley Crüe makes good music really isn't going to miss his hearing too much.

◆ Victoria Franks Rios is using a variation on the same theme to sue a nightclub. In 1995, she entered a hot-dog-eating contest and claims to have almost died during the competition. According to her lawsuit, she seeks unspecified damages precisely because "the predictable result...is that a contestant attempting to win the contest will choke on the hot dog." ▶

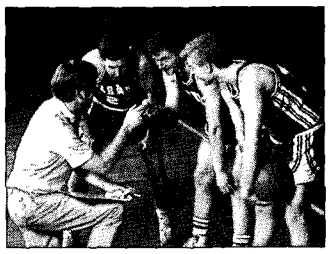
Henry Payne



will be difficult to counter it."

That is not to say that the AEA won't try. Lybeck is considering a two-pronged attack on the law: a constitutional challenge and a statewide referendum. While a constitutional challenge is unlikely to succeed, the AEA can put the law on hold until 1998 if it gathers 60,000 signatures to place the bill on the November ballot.

If a court challenge is mounted, the Washington, D.C.-based Institute for Justice is planning to argue on behalf of scholarship parents. And the Indianapolis-based American Education Reform Foundation promises to fight any attempts by the AEA to stall the law. "They will have a battle on their hands if they want to start it," warns AERF President Kevin Teasley. "We will tell the truth about the teachers' union attempts to thwart the will of the people."



No Justice, No Latte?

By Rick Henderson

Among the harshest allegations hurled at the business community by green activists and civil-rights leaders are those of "environmental racism," corporate America's supposedly conscious placement of toxic waste facilities in low-income, African-American neighborhoods. The evidence supporting these charges is spotty at best: For instance, a 1994 study by University of Massachusetts researchers found that the people who tend to live in polluted areas are those who work in the neighborhood, including employees of the polluting businesses.

Divining the intentions of business owners is a difficult chore. But it is possible to compare population patterns and land use. And a new study by researchers at the University of Chicago suggests that an entirely unexpected class of individuals in the City of Big Shoulders may be the "victims" of environmental injustice: white yuppies.

Economist Don Coursey, dean of the university's Harris Graduate School of Public Policy Studies, and graduate student Brett Baden examined Chicago's residential and industrial patterns in 1960 and 1990. After spending four years studying the population patterns around 205 locations regulated by the federal Resource Conservation and Recovery Act, 113 federal Superfund sites, and 105 solid-waste disposal areas, Coursey and Baden found the racial breakdown of the nearby residents mirrors that of the entire city.

In 1960 most of the industrial sites were located near commercial waterways or adjacent to Lake Michigan, where many of the residents were working-class white ethnics. (Indeed, Coursey and Baden found that, during those segregated times, few African-American neighborhoods were located in the city's industrial areas.) By

ARTIFACT

Gay Profusion

According to people who count these things, there are now some two dozen gay characters on TV. But only one of them is the central figure in a series: Ellen is out.

Ellen DeGeneres, star of the sitcom *Ellen*, discreetly noted her own gayness on the cover of *Time* ("Yep! I'm gay"). After a campaign to create a media "event," her character came out, too. The result was a case study in the fluidity of market-driven culture. Traditional, pre-market culture rarely changed its formulas, stock characters, or stereotypes. Its function was to propagandize on behalf of ruling forces, whether religious or secular. The command cultures of modern totalitarianism have served the same purpose. Market culture, however, because it must seek an audience, transfers cultural power to its customers. While not free of stereotypes, its stories and characters are subject to continuing change, whether for mere novelty, for shock, or even for high social purpose.

Ellen is a tepid comedy reportedly teetering on cancellation; its producers' motives were doubtless mixed. But as gay communities gathered for their "Coming Out With Ellen" parties, the larger revelation was not about Ellen at all; it was about a marketplace that was, again, revealed as an instrument of liberation.

—Charles Paul Freund

1990, however, many of the industrial sites had been abandoned and the area started attracting more upscale residents. Figuratively speaking, Coursey says, "the rivers in Chicago were sewers until recently. Now it's cool to live along the river."

Coursey says he "was pretty shocked" to discover that they could find little evidence of actual pollution at many of the locations listed as hazardous waste sites. And that, as these areas started to gentrify, working-class white residents were replaced by prosperous whites. He predicts studies of other large cities located along major waterways might yield similar results. "In the 1960s, neighborhoods were traditionally segregated, with white ethnics living near industrial sites," he says. "By 1990, segregation rules had changed," and less-polluted waterfront property could attract more-affluent residents.

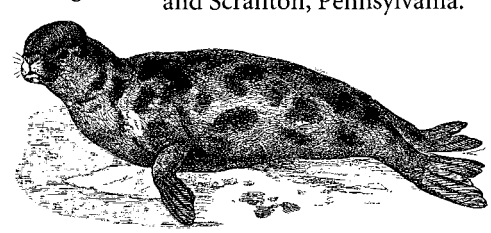
It Ain't Kosher

By Jacob Sullum

"For the first time in history," says the introduction to Citizens Against Government Waste's *1997 Congressional Pig Book Summary*, "the President has the line-item veto. Will he use it to cut deals or cut pork?" We may never find out. In April, a federal district court ruled that the line-item veto, approved by Congress in 1995 as part of the Contract with America, is an unconstitutional delegation of power.

Oh, well. The *Pig Book*, which describes some of the year's more egregious allocations of tax dollars, has entertainment value, if nothing else. CAGW counted $14.5 billion in total pork, up 16 percent from the previous session of Congress. A few highlights:

- $3.5 million for "wood utilization research"
- $445,000 for "improved fruit practices"
- $4 million for the Gambling Impact Study Commission
- $330,000 for Stellar Sea Lion research
- $5 million for the National Defense Center for Environmental Excellence
- $4 million for the Discovery Center of Science and Technology
- $2 million for an International Fertilizer Development Center
- $3 million for the George H.W. Bush Fellowship
- $3 million for buses and bus facilities in Williamsport and Scranton, Pennsylvania.



Hawaii, Alaska, Montana, and Oregon—the states of influential legislators—were the leaders in per capita pork, at $131, $114, $49, and $32, respectively. CAGW gave a Lifetime Achievement Award to Mark Hatfield (R-Ore.), former chairman of the Senate Appropriations Committee, whose pork totaled $509 million over six years. Hatfield still couldn't beat CAGW Hall of Shame inductee Sen. Daniel Inouye (D-Hawaii), who brought his state $765 million in pork during the same period.

Building Buzz

By Rick Henderson

Last fall, residents of Charlotte, North Carolina, were in despair. The owner of the city's NBA Hornets, George Shinn, was threatening to move the franchise unless taxpayers ponied up one-third of the estimated $160 ▶

BRICKBATS

◆ In Montana, state Sen. Casey Emerson has made it his goal to revive corporal punishment in schools. Now, several former students have stepped forward to say that Emerson doesn't just talk the talk—he walks the walk. Emerson was a junior high gym teacher in the '60s and '70s, and several former students have come forth to accuse him of slamming one student against the wall to get him to confess to a small theft, holding another's head in a urinal and flushing it, and pushing a third down a staircase. Emerson says the charges are politically motivated: "I've made my views on homosexuality known, what's wrong with the schools, and they intend to get me."

◆ Baltimore bills itself as "The City That Reads." But a study of local regulations shows that the city prohibits newsstands entirely. Guess they just don't read magazines and newspapers.

◆ In Accra, Ghana, a mob beat two men to death and injured several others after accusing them of using magic to make men's genitals disappear. No word on the men's motives for vanishing the penises.

◆ People who call government offices in Chelan County, Washington, won't have to listen to country music when they're put on hold anymore. Seems the sheriff complained that the music was always talking about "no good, low down, poor white trash." Fortunately, white trash have no lobby to protest the discriminatory practices of Chelan County.

—Charles Oliver

Chip Bok

ONE OF THOSE PESKY FILES OF YOURS HAS TURNED UP. AGAIN.
WHY THE PRESIDENT SHOULD BE IMPEACHED FOR OBSTRUCTION OF JUSTICE.
-by H.R. CLINTON, 1974 WATERGATE STAFF
REASON 97

million it would cost to finance a new arena. Though the team has sold out every game in the history of the eight-year-old franchise, the Charlotte Coliseum's paucity of luxury boxes—extra-plush seating areas that rent for hundreds of thousands of dollars per season—left Shinn without the corporate revenues other teams depend upon to pay top salaries for the best players.

Now there's nothing but smiles in the Queen City. This year, the scrappy Hornets won a franchise-record 54 regular season games. And Shinn has offered to buy the coliseum, giving the team a more permanent, private home.

Built by taxpayers in the late 1980s, the 24,000-seat coliseum was one of the last major indoor sports facilities not to feature large numbers of luxury boxes. While the Charlotte Coliseum has 12 luxury boxes, newer arenas such as Chicago's United Center and Cleveland's Gund Arena have three dozen or more.

Shinn first complained about the lack of luxury boxes in 1992. At that time Don Reid, a City Council member and former head of the taxpayer group Citizens for Effective Government, proposed selling the coliseum to Shinn for about $60 million, more than the debt the city owed on the arena. Reid was treated rather rudely by the local establishment, including then-Mayor Richard Vinroot, who opposed the sale in part out of fears that the city wouldn't be able to control events in a private facility. Vinroot suggested, to the horror of fellow Charlotteans, that a private coliseum might even host a Grateful Dead concert!

By 1996, however, Reid had built a coalition of neighborhood activists, opponents of higher taxes, and even the local League of Women Voters. These groups argued that the money borrowed to finance a new facility would crowd out spending for other public services or preclude tax relief. Selling the coliseum would also save local residents $4.5 million a year in debt service. And in the interim, the Carolina Panthers, Charlotte's NFL team, had moved into the new, private Ericsson Stadium, which got less than 20 percent of its funding from taxpayers.

By late March, Shinn had abandoned his demands for a new tax-funded arena, offering to buy the coliseum for the $30 million the city still owes. As owner of the arena, Shinn could build luxury boxes and capture all the revenue. At press time the city had not yet accepted Shinn's proposal for a different reason than before: It's entertaining offers from other investors who may pay more for the coliseum and then lease it to the Hornets.

Opting out of Social Security

By Brian Doherty

While being allowed to opt out of Social Security is doubtless still a long way away, Oregon is taking the first tentative steps toward downsizing the failing federal program to the state level.

In early May, Oregon's state House passed a resolution by a 31–22 vote requesting that its national congressional delegation vote to allow states to opt out of the federal system and design their own retirement plans. (Oregon's Senate passed the resolution 20–8 in February.)

The resolution is nonbinding. But as Steve Buckstein, president of the Cascade Institute, a Portland-based free market think tank, points out, it marks a political willingness to go on the record with the notion that Social Security is doomed. Buckstein says his organization will be ready with a plan for a privatized Oregon-based retirement system if the state is given an opt-out right.

Oregon is a leader in getting federal waivers from national programs, and is already managing its own versions of federal Medicaid and welfare programs.

Wet Policy

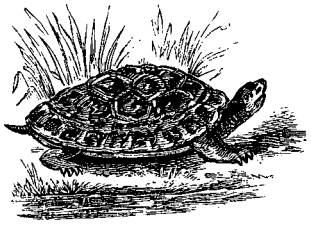
By Brian Doherty

The federal government could get better value for its money in wetland preservation by buying direct and leaving private landowners alone, says a new study from the Competitive Enterprise Institute.

Various government efforts have indeed ensured no net loss of wetlands—in fact, there's been an increase. In 1995 alone, CEI estimated a country-wide net gain in wetlands of 69,000 acres.

But 90 percent of that increase comes from three separate preservation programs, not from regulatory programs administered by the Army Corps of Engineers that make sure private landowners don't affect wetlands. The preservation programs buy "conservation easement" rights from eager farmers, who retain ownership of the lands that are returned to a wet state.

Not only are the buyout programs more effective—they're cheaper, too. "If you look at what it costs to buy conservation easements vs. what it costs to pay these wetland bureaucrats in the Army Corps of Engineers program," says study author Jonathan Tolman, "the regulatory program is five times more expensive per acre saved than the voluntary one. It's not only unnecessary to regulate private wetlands to generate net gains, it's a lot more expensive than the voluntary alternative."



DATA

A Cost-Ineffective Drug War

By Nick Gillespie

One sign of a successful law-enforcement war on drugs should be rising prices for the outlawed substances. If federal agents are successfully sealing the border and police efforts are genuinely making trafficking riskier, drugs should become more expensive. As the price data below for cocaine indicate, it hasn't worked out that way. (Similar trends can also be observed for other illegal drugs, such as marijuana, LSD, and heroin.)

Average Retail Price for One Kilogram of Cocaine

Year	National Price Range (in nominal dollars)
1990	$11,000–$40,000
1991	$11,000–$40,000
1992	$11,000–$42,000
1993	$10,500–$40,000
1994	$10,500–$40,000
1995	$10,500–$36,000

Source: Drug Enforcement Agency and the National Narcotics Intelligence Consumers Committee

Indeed, because the prices have not been adjusted for inflation, their seeming stability actually masks a *decrease* in cost. Over the same period, the government estimates that demand for drugs has remained relatively constant. In 1990, the National Household Survey on Drug Abuse reported 0.9 percent of people aged 12 and older had used cocaine in the previous month. In 1991, the percentage peaked at 1 percent, before declining to 0.7 for 1992–1995.

Biting at the Gag

By Jacob Sullum

The Clinton administration's "don't tell" policy on medical marijuana—which threatens doctors who recommend the drug to their patients with loss of prescribing privileges, exclusion from Medicare and Medicaid, and criminal prosecution—has suffered a setback in federal court. On April 30, U.S. District Judge Fern Smith issued a preliminary injunction that prevents the government from acting on its threats while a lawsuit filed in January by a group of California doctors is pending.

Smith said the "plaintiffs have raised serious questions as to the constitutionality of the defendants' 'policy' regarding Proposition 215," the California initiative that approved medical use of cannabis. She noted evidence that "physicians have been censoring their discussions with patients about medical marijuana out of fear that the government will either prosecute them or take away their prescription licenses."

The Clinton administration has sent mixed signals about how it will treat such discussions. In mid-February, a Justice Department attorney said doctors could not escape punishment "by claiming that they are merely providing their patients with 'recommendations' in accordance with their best medical judgment." Two weeks later, an assistant secretary in the Department of Health and Human Services said, "Nothing in federal law prevents a physician, in the context of a legitimate physician-patient relationship, from merely discussing with a patient the risks and alleged benefits of ▶

QUOTES

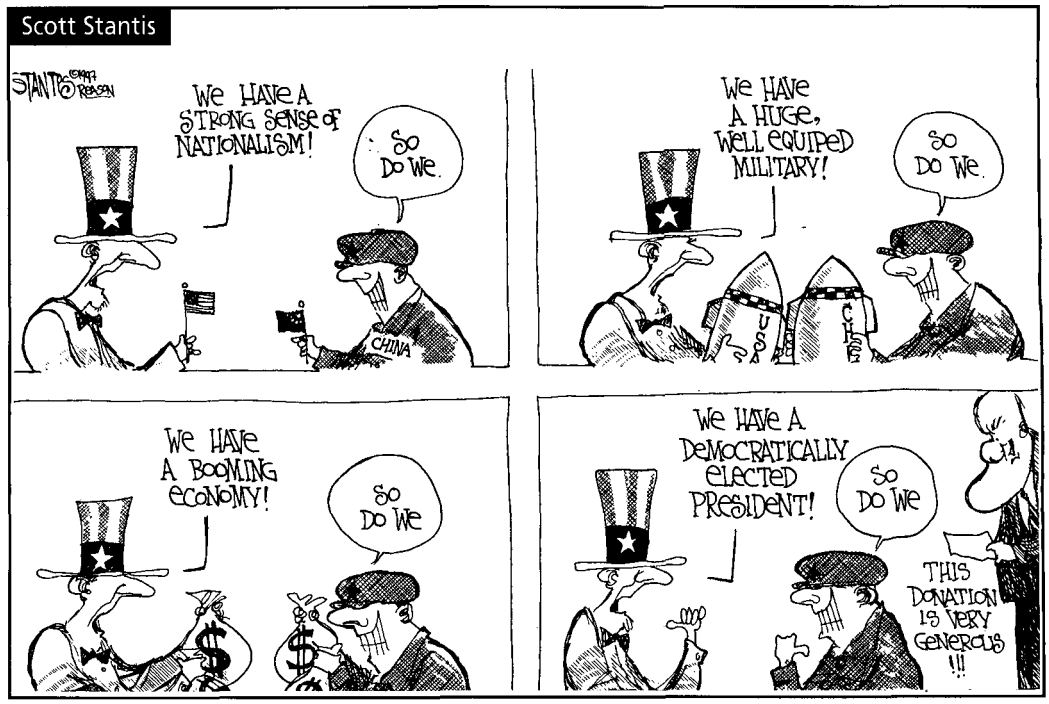
"We will not go gently into the long, dark night of rapid, radical, destructive utility deregulation."
—Richard Trumka, secretary-treasurer of the AFL-CIO, in *Newsweek*, April 14, 1997.

"It is a very unfortunate system, because we no longer know which party is going to win."
—Jesus Silva-Herzog, Mexican ambassador to the United States, on the breakdown of one-party rule by the PRI, in the *Los Angeles Times*, April 9, 1997.

"In Prague, visitors have reported both cabbages and Marxist books on sale by the pound in shops near Charles University: 'A pound of cabbage costs more than a pound of Marx.'"
—Darió Fernández-Morera, in *American Academia and the Survival of Marxist Ideas* (Praeger).

China "would clothe most of the world if we let it."
—An anonymous American official, in an April 1 *New York Times* story about Chinese manufacturers who evade U.S. import quotas by shipping garments through other countries.

Scott Stantis



the use of marijuana to relieve pain or alleviate symptoms."

A second lawsuit, filed on March 6 in the U.S. District Court for the District of Columbia, asserts that the federal policy on medical marijuana violates not only the First Amendment but also the Administrative Procedure Act, the Commerce Clause, the Ninth Amendment, and the 10th Amendment. The plaintiffs are Nevada entrepreneurs Durk Pearson and Sandy Shaw, who claim standing both as patients and as consultants to doctors who might recommend marijuana; the Life Extension Foundation; the American Preventive Medical Association; and several individual physicians.

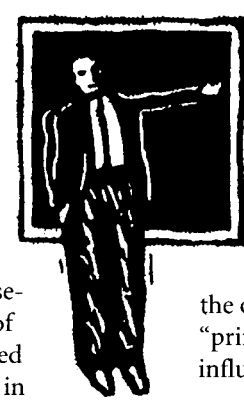
Pearson et al. argue that the federal government has no authority to regulate intrastate prescription, distribution, and use of a medicine sanctioned by state law. They cite statutes in Connecticut, Virginia, and Louisiana, as well as California's initiative and another passed in Arizona that, among other things, permitted prescription of all Schedule I drugs, including marijuana.

Union Dues

By Michael W. Lynch

In 1992, voters in the state of Washington approved an initiative that, among other things, prohibited unions from funding political efforts with mandatory dues. That wasn't good news for the Washington Education Association, which saw contributions to its political action committee drop 83 percent.

Worried that its political clout might wane proportionally, the WEA created a "Community Outreach Program," and charged each of its members $12 per month for "educating the community." Barb Amidon, a dues-paying school counselor, was suspicious of the new fee. She asked about the fund and, in a slip of honesty, a union representative told her the money was for political causes. Amidon reported the fund to the state's Public Disclosures Committee. When the committee barely budged to investigate, Amidon took the case to Bob Williams of the Evergreen Freedom Foundation, a Washington state think tank.



Williams, a certified public accountant, claims to have found more than $4 million in union spending abuses and brought his findings to the PDC, which turned the matter over to the state's attorney general, who filed a lawsuit against the WEA in February.

The lawsuit charges the WEA with failing to report hundreds of thousands of dollars in contributions, "loans," and expenditures used for the union's political activities. The state also claims the outreach program's "primary purpose was to influence the political

process by supporting or opposing candidates and ballot measures." No court date has been set.

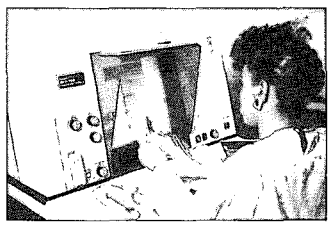
The stakes are high for the union, which could be fined as much as $10,000 per violation. "The whole thing is an issue of integrity," says Amidon, who complains that the union cares more about partisan politics than educational issues. "We want the union to get back to meeting the real needs of classroom students and teachers."

Working Women, Give Up

By Brian Doherty

The tax code can be seen as "pro-family" in at least one respect: It makes going to work for married women actually cost their families money under some circumstances. That's one conclusion of *Taxing Women*, a new book by University of Southern California economist Edward J. McCaffery.

For a hypothetical woman whose husband made $15,000 a year, McCaffery found that her taking a full-



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time job paying $5.00 an hour could actually *decrease* the couple's overall compensation by $1,450. After she pays her income tax in her husband's tax bracket, Social Security taxes, state and local taxes, and typical child care and work-related expenses, and loses the earned-income tax credit, she's working for less than nothing.

While conservatives might suggest that this just means the little lady should stay home as tradition intends, McCaffery argues that this perverse tax incentive means that "for poor women, being married often makes little financial sense, and unfortunately, that includes many women with children." Which means the tax code, like welfare, can be one more way the government discourages family formation among the poor.

SOUNDBITE

Syndrome Syndrome

PRYDE BRIGMAN

In *Hystories: Hysterical Epidemics and Modern Media*, Princeton University English Professor Elaine Showalter argues that phenomena such as Gulf War Syndrome, chronic fatigue syndrome, multiple personality syndrome, and belief in recovered memory, ritual satanic abuse, and alien abduction share something besides a complete lack of credible evidence. They are, she says, latter-day hysterias, psychosomatic disorders whose roots lie not in organic causes but in psychological distress.

Hystories maps out the process by which such conditions develop, gather momentum, and spread throughout a culture. "Modern forms of individual and mass hysteria have much to tell us about the anxieties and fantasies of western culture, especially in the United States and Europe," writes Showalter, who spoke with Senior Editor Nick Gillespie by telephone.

Q: What do contemporary hysterias tell us?

A: They represent an obsession with conspiracy and paranoia. That's not new [in America]—it's just been taken to a new level. I think the millenium is certainly playing a part in this. Something like alien abduction, which is a form of recovered memory, is similar to apocalyptic beliefs historians describe around the year 1000.

There's an incredible externalization of problems going on. We have this image of our society as a therapeutic culture. It's true—there's been an incredible proliferation of therapy: You know, the 12-step programs, the Recovery Channel, the friendly neighborhood hypnotherapist, and so on. But there's a much stronger hostility to the idea that the unconscious [mind] might be responsible for problems: If I'm unhappy as an adult, then my father must have molested me. If I don't fit my ideal of how I should behave, then obviously I'm a victim of a satanic cult.

Q: How do hysterias start?

A: They usually begin in a fairly small, isolated community. With chronic fatigue syndrome, it was Incline Village, Nevada. With Gulf War Syndrome, it was a single battalion. You get a lot of vague symptoms and complaints. Then you need a charismatic doctor or scientist who begins to [define] it. That gets picked up by the media, and more and more doctors hear about it and they pick up more and more patients. When it reaches some sort of critical mass, patient groups start to organize and it politicizes. At that point, sufferers begin to ask for things: They want more money, they want insurance, they want disability, they want recognition, whatever.

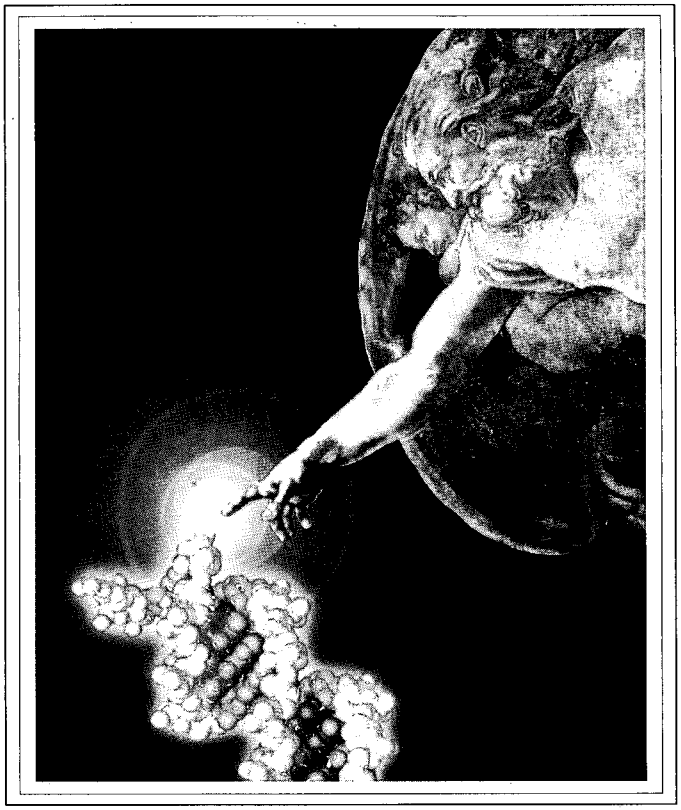
Q: What's the role of the media in all this?

A: They provide instantaneous information. The [Salem] witch trials were short-lived partly because communications were so bad. The town of Andover, about 30 miles away, didn't know what was going on for months. Now, it's overnight: The story's on the Internet immediately, the 5 o'clock news, the TV movie of the week. The media spread the imagery, the language, and the mythology of the hysteria. That's why symptoms tend to organize fairly quickly. If, for instance, an American sees an alien, they see "our" alien, a small, gray [creature]. That's what an American alien looks like. It doesn't look like an Israeli alien or a Dutch alien.

The media can also rebut stories. The pendulum swings the other way. I've even noticed that in some trailers for summer movies, things are moving toward parodying conspiracy theories and parodying UFOs. It's done seriously for a while, then you have Leslie Nielsen and his gang do it. It's self-correcting in that sense.

ORIGIN *of the* SPECIOUS

Why do neoconservatives doubt Darwin?



By Ronald Bailey

Darwinism is on the way out. At least, that's what Irving Kristol announced to a gathering at the American Enterprise Institute in Washington not long ago. Darwinian evolution, according to the godfather of neoconservatism, "is really no longer accepted so easily by [many] biologists and scientists." Why? Because, Kristol explained, scientifically minded Darwin doubters are once again focusing on "the old-fashioned argument from design." That is to say, life in all its apparently ordered complexity cannot be understood in terms of chance mutation and the competition for survival. There must, after all, be a designer. So, exit Darwin; enter—or re-enter—God.

This may seem to some readers to be a personal quirk of Kristol's. Perhaps as he approaches Eternity (he's 77), he may want some grand company there. But Kristol's friend and colleague Robert Bork is claiming the same thing: Charles Darwin and his theories are finished. In his new work, *Slouching Towards Gomorrah: Modern Liberalism and American Decline,* Bork pins his own anti-evolutionary attack on *Darwin's Black Box: The Biochemical Challenge to Evolution,* a recent book by biochemist Michael Behe. Bork declares that Behe "has shown that Darwinism cannot explain life as we know it." He adds approvingly that the book "may be read as the modern, scientific version of the argument from design to the existence of a designer." Bork triumphantly concludes: "Religion will no longer have to fight scientific atheism with unsupported faith. The presumption has shifted, and naturalist atheism and secular humanism are on the defensive."

Are these merely two isolated intellectual voices preaching that old-time design? Hardly. Last summer, the Ethics and Public Policy Center, a think tank devoted to studying the role of religion in public policy, and now headed by neoconservative Elliott Abrams, called together a group of conservative intellectuals, including Kristol, his wife, Gertrude Himmelfarb, and Hoover Institution fellow Tom Bethell, to listen to anti-Darwin presentations by Behe and Michael Denton, author of *Evolution: A Theory*

ANDREA BARUFFI

in Crisis. Himmelfarb has told at least one colleague that she, too, thinks the Behe book "excellent."

There's yet more. The neoconservative journal *Commentary*, of all periodicals, joined this attack last June with a cover essay, "The Deniable Darwin," written by mathematician David Berlinski.

"An act of intelligence is required to bring even a thimble into being," wrote Berlinski, "why should the artifacts of life be different?" Berlinski warmly endorsed Behe's book, praising it as "an extraordinary piece of work that will come to be regarded as one of the most important books ever written about Darwinian theory. No one can propose to defend Darwin without meeting the challenges set out in this superbly written and compelling book." *Commentary* Editor Neal Kozodoy says he was "delighted" that his magazine served as a "forum for airing this issue." Berlinski "hit a nerve," according to Kozodoy, not only among the scientists he criticized, but "out there, among general readers, many of whom seem preoccupied with the issues he raised."

What's going on here? Opponents of Darwin traditionally have been led by biblical literalists, whose "arguments" on the subject have been generated mostly by the Book of Genesis. Now their camp includes some of the most prominent thinkers in the conservative intellectual movement.

As a matter of historical curiosity, this new turning of neocon eyes toward heaven comes just as Pope John Paul II has officially recognized that "the theory of evolution is more than an hypothesis." Indeed, it comes as evolutionary thinking itself is shedding considerable light on an array of questions and problems, from brain growth to the development of immune systems, from sociobiology to economics, from ecology to software design. Such research is yielding *anti*-designer results. F.A. Hayek long ago recognized the phenomenon of "spontaneous order" and described how it arose in markets, families, and other social institutions. Now, ingenious computer models are confirming Hayek's insights. It is increasingly obvious that social systems, from commerce to language, evolve and adapt without the need for top-down planning and organization. Order in markets is generated through processes analogous to Darwinian natural selection in biology. In other words, we can indeed have apparent design without a designer; the world is demonstrably brimming with just such phenomena.

But the neocon assault on Darwinism may not be based on either science or spirituality so much as on politics and political philosophy. That is the view of Paul Gross, a biologist and self-described conservative. Gross is much concerned with the interplay of science and politics—he is the co-author of the 1994 book, *Higher Superstition: The Academic Left and Its Quarrels with Science*—and is puzzled by the attacks on evolutionary biology by people whose political views he largely shares. Regarding *Commentary*'s anti-Darwin article, he says he is mystified that the magazine "would publish the damned thing without at least passing it by a few scientists first."

Gross believes that the conservative attack on Darwin may be a case of tactical politics. Some conservative intellectuals think religious fundamentalists are "essential to the political program of the right," says Gross. As a gesture of solidarity, he says, these intellectuals are publicly embracing arguments that appear to "keep God in the picture."

The end of the Cold War may also be a factor. Marx fell with the Soviet Union; Freud has been discredited by modern psychology and neuroscience. The last standing member of the 19th century's unholy materialist trinity is Darwin. Berkeley law professor Phillip Johnson, author of *Darwin on Trial*, makes the connection clear: "Darwinism is the most important of the materialist ideologies—Marxism, Freudianism, and behaviorism are others—which have done so much damage to science and society in the 20th century." Kristol agrees. "All I want to do," he told his AEI audience, "is break the bonds of Darwinian materialism which at the moment restrict our imagination. For the moment that's enough."

But something deeper seems to be going on, and the key to it can be found in Bork's assertion in his book that religious "belief is probably essential to a civilized future." These otherwise largely secular intellectuals may well have turned on Darwin because they have concluded that his theory of evolution undermines religious faith in society at large. Of course, this is not a novel thought. Many others have arrived at the same conclusion. Conservative activist Beverly LaHaye, a biblical literalist who is president of Concerned Women for America, puts the matter directly: "If the biblical account of creation in Genesis isn't true, how can we trust the rest of the Bible?"

Kristol and his colleagues may worry that once this one thread is pulled from the fabric of religious belief, perhaps the whole will become unraveled, with grave social consequences. Without the strictures and traditions imposed by a religion that promises to punish sinners, the moral controls that moderate our base desires will lose their validity, leading ultimately to moral chaos. Ironically, today many modern conservatives fervently agree with Karl Marx that religion is "the opium of the people"; they add a heartfelt, "Thank God!"

It is no secret that many neocons are in a deep funk over the state of American society. (For an especially glum assessment, dip into Bork's best-seller.) In the 1960s, many of them advocated federal programs to ameliorate such social ills as poverty, crime, racial discrimination, illegiti-

macy, and drug abuse. But as one social welfare program after another succumbed to its unintended consequences, they recognized the limits of governmental intervention. Having suffered a crisis of faith in the efficacy of social science, they now believe that only the restoration of religious belief among the masses can re-establish order in American society. As David Brooks recently wrote in the conservative journal *The Weekly Standard*, policy intellectuals used to sound like economists; now they sound like ministers. He's right. At conservative confabs today, the longing for yet one more Great Awakening of religious fervor is palpable.

Kristol has been quite candid about his belief that religion is essential for inculcating and sustaining morality in culture. He wrote in a 1991 essay, "If there is one indisputable fact about the human condition it is that no community can survive if it is persuaded—or even if it suspects—that its members are leading meaningless lives in a meaningless universe."

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Another prominent neoconservative, Leon Kass, author of *Toward a More Natural Science* (1985), and a member of the University of Chicago's prestigious Committee on Social Thought, also believes that evolutionary theory poses a threat to social order: "[T]he creationists and their fundamentalist patrons...sense that orthodox evolutionary theory cannot support any notions we might have regarding human dignity or man's special place in the whole. And they see that Western moral teaching, so closely tied to Scripture, is also in peril if any major part of Scripture can be shown to be false."

At the heart of the neoconservative attack on Darwinism lies the political philosophy of Leo Strauss. Strauss was a German political philosopher who fled the Nazis in 1938 and began teaching at the University of Chicago in 1949. In an intellectual revolt against modernity, Strauss focused his work on interpreting such classics as Plato's *Republic* and Machiavelli's *The Prince.*

Kristol has acknowledged his intellectual debt to Strauss in a recent autobiographical essay. "What made him so controversial within the academic community was his disbelief in the Enlightenment dogma that 'the truth will make men free.' " Kristol adds that "Strauss was an intellectual aristocrat who thought that the truth could make *some* [emphasis Kristol's] minds free, but he was convinced that there was an inherent conflict between philosophic truth and political order, and that the popularization and vulgarization of these truths might import unease, turmoil and the release of popular passions hitherto held in check by tradition and religion with utterly unpredictable, but mostly negative, consequences."

Kristol agrees with this view. "There are different kinds of truths for different kinds of people," he says in an interview. "There are truths appropriate for children; truths that are appropriate for students; truths that are appropriate for educated adults; and truths that are appropriate for highly educated adults, and the notion that there should be one set of truths available to everyone is a modern democratic fallacy. It doesn't work."

In crude terms, some critics of Strauss argue that he interpreted the ancient philosophers as offering two different teachings, an esoteric one which is available only to those who read the ancient texts closely, and an exoteric one accessible to naive readers. The exoteric interpretations were aimed at the mass of people, the vulgar, while the esoteric teachings—the hidden meanings—were vouchsafed to the few, the philosophers. Philosophers know the truth, but must keep it hidden from the vulgar, lest it upset them. What is the hidden truth known to philosophers? That there is no God and there is no ultimate foundation for morality. As Kristol suggests, it is necessary to keep this truth from the vulgar because such knowledge would only engender despair in them and lead to social breakdown. In his book, *On Tyranny: An Interpretation of Xenophon's Hiero*, Strauss asserts with unusual clarity that Socratic dialogues are "based on the premise that there is a disproportion between the intransigent quest for truth and the requirements of society, or that not all truths are always harmless."

Political scientist Shadia Drury, a passionate critic of Strauss, puts it this way: "For Strauss, the ills of modernity have their source in the foolish belief that there are no harmless truths, and that belief in God and in rewards and punishments is not necessary for political order.... [H]e is convinced that religion is necessary for the well-being of society. But to state publicly that religion is a necessary fiction would destroy any salutary effect it might have. The latter depends on its being believed to be true.... If the vulgar discovered, as the philosophers have always

known, that God is dead, they might behave as if all is permitted."

Thus, to preserve society, wise people must publicly support the traditions and myths that sustain the political order and that encourage ordinary people to obey the laws and live justly. People will do so only if they believe that moral rules are divinely decreed or were set up by men who were inspired by the Divine.

Kristol restated this insight nearly five decades ago in an essay in *Commentary* dealing with Freud: "If God does not exist, and if religion is an illusion that the majority of men cannot live without...let men believe in the lies of religion since they cannot do without them, and let then a handful of sages, who know the truth and can live with it, keep it among themselves. Men are then divided into the wise and the foolish, the philosophers and the common men, and atheism becomes a guarded, esoteric doctrine—for if the illusions of religion were to be discredited, there is no telling with what madness men would be seized, with what uncontrollable anguish."

Thus, following the lead of Strauss and Kristol, those who support the attacks on evolutionary biology may be reasonably suspected of practicing a high-minded hypocrisy. They want to bolster popular morality and preserve social order. Attacking Darwin helps to sustain what Plato regarded as a "Noble Lie"— in this case preserving the faith of the common people in Genesis, and thus the social order.

But perhaps this analysis is too cynical. Perhaps Darwinism really is being challenged by new scientific evidence. In that case, the neoconservative intellectuals would be on the cutting edge of a reassessment of evolutionary biology. Kristol certainly seems to think that Behe's and Berlinski's attacks on Darwin have "fractured the dogmatism of the neo-Darwinian synthesis," and he believes that as a consequence "there is room for metaphysical and theological speculation." Let's take a look.

Mathematician David Berlinski's *Commentary* article, "The Deniable Darwin," has been warmly embraced by conservative intellectuals. The magazine published a voluminous correspondence concerning the piece in a subsequent issue, including letters from both critics and supporters. Hoover Institution fellow and longtime anti-Darwinian Tom Bethell, for example, commended *Commentary*. "Now we no longer believe in the idea of progress," he wrote, "and faith in biological evolution may be jeopardized as a result." Rabbi Daniel Lapin, head of the politically conservative Jewish organization Toward Tradition, hailed the Berlinski article as "a shot in what is becoming a great moral revolution." He added, "Discovering that Darwin is deniable might tell us a little of how primitive life began. It would tell us everything about how modern life should continue. Today's greatest question is whether humans have been touched by the divine and thus possess moral judgment or whether we are just sophisticated animals."

But Berlinski stoutly declares in *Commentary* that he is no creationist. He claims merely to be engaged in critiquing the failures of Darwinism. Berlinski is particularly savage about what he regards as Darwinism's tautological character. "Time and again, biologists do explain the survival of an organism by reference to its fitness and the fitness of an organism by reference to its survival, the friction between the two concepts kindling nothing more than the observation that some creatures have been around for a very long time."

In Berlinski's view, evolutionary theory simply says that the ones that survive are the ones that survive. But that is not quite right. Darwinian natural selection sifts for useful variations among mutations, thus natural selection generates increased fitness, not just preserving the fittest. This process generates new species, species B being the descendant of earlier species A. This claim is clearly more than a tautology.

Berlinski also contrasts geological theory with evolutionary theory. He argues that geological theory offers general rules that, for example, exclude the possibility of "a mountain arranging itself in the shape of the letter 'A'." He then grandly proclaims that "the theory of evolution, by contrast, is incapable of ruling *anything* out of court [emphasis his]."

The comparison between geology and evolutionary biology is particularly apt, but not in the way Berlinski thinks. Geology, like evolutionary biology, is to a considerable extent a historical science which tries to analyze unrepeatable events that happened in the distant past. Events in geology, like those in evolution, are compounded of myriad facts, contingencies, and details that simply cannot be completely accounted for. Despite geology's general and well-understood principles—the operation of faults, plate tectonics, upthrust, etc.—geologists are still unable to predict an earthquake's strength, time, or location. But Berlinski certainly never says that geology is not a science.

Berlinski is simply wrong when he claims that evolutionary biology "is incapable of ruling *anything* out of court." Two examples: Darwinians would confidently predict that fossilized human skeletons will never be found among undisturbed Jurassic fossils. Also, biologists agree that a general principle of evolutionary biology rules out the possibility that there are organisms that will sacrifice their own reproductive success in order to enhance the reproductive success of some other species.

Berlinski also argues that mathematical calculation shows it is absurdly improbable that life could have arisen by a chance combination of chemicals in the primordial soup. Berlinski asserts that randomness overwhelms any

other process if we try to maintain the perspective of naturalism. Therefore we are treated to calculations that show the number of all possible proteins is far greater than the number of atoms in the universe or the number of seconds that have passed since the Big Bang. These calculations are supposed to overwhelm our capacity to believe that life could arise spontaneously. But is life really so improbable? Investigations into complexity theory by Stuart Kauffman and other scientists at the Santa Fe Institute indicate otherwise: that spontaneous order may be part and parcel of the universe.

In David Berlinski's view, evolutionary theory simply says that the ones that survive are the ones that survive. That is not quite right. Darwinian natural selection sifts for useful variations among mutations, thus natural selection generates increased fitness, not just preserving the fittest. This process generates new species, species B being the descendant of earlier species A. This is clearly more than a tautology.

The other new anti-Darwin champion is Lehigh University biochemist Michael Behe. In *Darwin's Black Box*, Behe argues that many cellular systems are "irreducibly complex." An irreducibly complex "system needs several components before it can work properly." He uses the humble mousetrap as an example—one cannot catch mice with only a platform, then catch more with the addition of a spring—all the pieces must be there for it to work. Behe then proceeds to describe in great detail examples of what he thinks are irreducibly complex biological systems, e.g., bacterial flagella, the cascade required for blood to clot, and the chemical chain that must fire in order to for us to see. In each case, he asserts that there is no way that such a complex structure could have arisen gradually—all the links must be there in order for the systems to operate properly.

Behe, in a letter to *The Wall Street Journal*, frankly acknowledges that his is "a distinctly minority view among scientists on the question of what caused evolution." But Behe wants it clearly understood that he is no biblical literalist: "In the book I specifically say I am not a creationist, agree that the universe is billions of years old, [and] believe in descent of life from a common ancestor."

Unlike Berlinski, Behe more or less concedes that Darwinian evolution occurred once the biochemical systems operating inside of cells were "designed." In his view, the flowering of the various species we find in the fossil record and in the world today were potential in the original "designed" cells that came into existence 3.5 billion years or so ago.

Behe is addressing the origins problem—how did the whole show get started in the first place? It is true that no satisfactory answer for the question of how life began has yet been devised; it is a question that scientists are only beginning to address in an organized manner. Richard Dawkins, the arch-Darwinist author of *The Selfish Gene* (1976) and last year's *Climbing Mount Improbable*, accuses Behe of intellectual laziness on the question. "The role of a biochemist is to work on problems," he says, "not just throw up his hands and say that since it's not obvious how some biochemical cascade may have evolved, then it must therefore be the result of design."

Among those working on the origins question is biologist and Nobel laureate Christian De Duve, who has outlined a theory of how life might have arisen. He dubs his theory the "thioester-iron world," after the chemicals he thinks could have reacted together to create "protometabolisms" that could evolve. He admits his theory is very speculative, but believes that one day biologists may find traces of the prior existence of these protometabolisms in the biochemistry of contemporary organisms.

Another promising approach is complexity theory. Scientists at the Santa Fe Institute argue that life is practically the inevitable result of the laws of physics and chemistry. According to Stuart Kauffman, life bootstrapped itself into existence through autocatalytic sets of chemicals that were in the primordial soup. Kauffman postulates that if a chemical soup has enough different types of compounds, they will begin to act in metabolic ways and be able to reproduce and evolve. (See "Who Ordered That?" February 1996.)

Robert Shapiro, a professor of chemistry at New York University and author of *Origins: A Skeptic's Guide to the Creation of Life on Earth* (1986), explains how Kauffman's theory might be checked out: "You take what you think are a nice set of chemicals and you put them together. You decide what the appropriate energy source is and you just follow it. If a network of reactions à la Kauffman sets itself up—A catalyzes B, B catalyzes C, C catalyzes D—and you don't get all tar or an equilibrium mixture where nothing changes, but energy is being used productively ...with certain chemicals taking over the mixture and others disappearing," then you will have established a base from which to proceed. "Now you play with initial ingredients and see how broad the base is of chemicals which will support this pre-biotic simulation." If the chemical reaction networks remain open-ended, then biochemists may have developed a plausible example of how such

networks began to evolve into living things.

In fact, a German scientist, Günter Wächtershäuser, has recently published a paper in *Science* magazine describing his efforts to uncover such plausible protometabolisms. He has found an open-ended chemical cycle that produces an active form of acetic acid, thought to mirror an ancient metabolic pathway in bacteria. Such a protometabolism, he argues, could have existed billions of years ago on metal sulfide surfaces found at hot deep ocean vents, and could have been one of the first steps in the evolution of life.

Kauffmanesque spontaneous self-organization would be a different source of order from that yielded by the process of Darwinian natural selection. Of course, Kauffman's work needs to be validated, but it is the kind of scientific theory that could make Behe's claims moot and undermine Berlinski's mathematical improbability argument. Berlinski's counterargument against the work of the Santa Fe Institute, by the way, is simple denial. "I find nothing of value in various theories of self-organization," he wrote in his reply to the *Commentary* correspondence, "the very idea is to my mind incoherent; but I leave it to others to make the case." Why not him? Berlinski thinks life's too short. "[S]oon the night comes, as Dr. Johnson reminds us, wherein no man can work."

So if Darwinian evolutionary biology is still a viable scientific theory, is it nevertheless a "harmful truth" in the Straussian sense? Does it necessarily undermine the moral order? Is it necessarily in conflict with religion? Kristol thinks so. According to him, it undermines even "the belief that there is such a thing as a moral code."

Last summer, the Divine Action Conference, held biannually at the pope's summer palace near Rome, brought together a group of scientists and theologians to address the issue of what science and religion may have in common. The conference topic was evolution.

The Divine Action Conference is jointly sponsored by the Vatican and the Center for Theology and Natural Science. The head of CTNS, Robert Russell, is both a physicist and an ordained minister in the Church of Christ. Asked about evolution, Russell said, "As a Christian, I believe in God as creator....All of nature articulates God's grace as creator and redeemer. So evolution, which we discover through science, is in fact the way God goes about being creator." Another conference participant, the Christian philosopher Nancey Murphy from the Fuller Theological Seminary, said: "I think it is a terrible misconception to see evolutionary biology and Christian theology as in competition. Ever since the rise of modern science, Christians have had to come to terms with some understanding of God working through natural processes. And God's action in natural biological processes should not be an exception to that."

These views are called "compatibilism." They see no necessary contradiction between evolutionary theory and belief in a divine creator. Russell and Murphy are "theistic evolutionists." In fact, during his lecture at AEI, Irving Kristol revealed that he is probably a compatibilist: "I accept evolution. Something like that happened." Compatibilism is scorned by some scientists; Richard Dawkins, for example, wonders, "Why deliberately set [life] up in the one way that makes it look like you don't exist?"

Still, it received a big boost in October when Pope John Paul II issued a statement that said, "fresh knowledge leads to recognition of the theory of evolution as more than just an hypothesis." The pope even suggested that humans arose from animal ancestors but added that, "If the human body has its origin in living material which pre-exists it, the spiritual soul is immediately created by God." The pope's statement added, "The convergence, neither sought nor provoked, of results of studies undertaken independently from each other constitutes in itself a significant argument in favor of this theory."

The pope certainly knows what he is talking about—the findings of paleontology and genetics have converged. Today, biologists can construct nearly identical family trees of organisms using independently derived information from systematic biological classifications, the fossil record, and molecular data from the genomes of organisms.

Taxonomists classify organisms into familiar groups of kingdoms, families, genera, down to species by comparing their similarities and differences. The process of classifying reveals relationships, e.g., horses and hogs are more similar to each other than they are to hawks or hornbills. This implies that horses and hogs descended from some earlier mammal species rather than from some earlier bird species.

The fossil record supports the findings of the taxonomists by providing insights into the ancestral species of mammals and birds. The mammalian and the avian branches on the tree of life clearly derived from different types of reptiles that lived tens of millions of years ago.

Molecular biology traces how genes have changed over time. In fact, some research suggests that mutations can act like a molecular clock that shows how long ago the last common ancestor of two different lineages lived. The more differences in the genes, the longer ago the common ancestor lived. For example, genetic changes show that horses and hogs shared a last common ancestor far more recently than either shared one with hawks or hornbills.

Despite the strong scientific support for evolutionary biology, there is no denying at least some of the force of the neoconservative arguments about the role religion has played in sustaining civil society. Even Herbert Spencer, that champion of individualism, concluded in his autobiography that "the control exercised over men's conduct

by theological beliefs and priestly agency, has been indispensable." There is an eerie sort of agreement between Darwinist Dawkins, Leo Strauss, and Irving Kristol. All three believe that religion's role in society may be to bolster social cohesion. Religious belief can persuade people, especially young men, to sacrifice themselves for the good of the community. Perhaps religion functions as a type of group selection device—it might be bad for individual members of society, but it is good for the whole and enhances the success of a group in its competition with other groups. Even Hayek argued in *The Fatal Conceit* (1988) that groups that evolved better institutions would outcompete and replace groups with less effective institutions. Could Western religions be such institutions?

The concept that religion and Darwinian evolution are compatible received a boost when the pope issued a statement that said, "fresh knowledge leads to recognition of the theory of evolution as more than just an hypothesis." The pope even suggested that humans arose from animal ancestors but added that, "If the human body has its origin in living material which pre-exists it, the spiritual soul is immediately created by God."

For Robert Russell, Nancey Murphy, and the pope, evolutionary biology doesn't undermine the authority of Christianity in the moral sphere, but their views are quite sophisticated. University of Florida historian of science Frederick Gregory has a point when he writes that people—such as many of the intellectuals at the Divine Action Conference—"who have felt forced by Darwin to admit that God has no reference to nature have made theology unrecognizable as theology to the majority of believers for whom a demythologized Christianity is no real Christianity at all."

Now, Irving Kristol, Leon Kass, and Robert Bork are smart men. They would certainly qualify as Straussian "philosophers." Perhaps they know the philosopher's "hidden knowledge." If so, what do they think they should do? A hint of how they may be responding can be found in *Darwin and the Darwinian Revolution*, written by Gertrude Himmelfarb. "So solicitous of morality were the Victorian agnostics," she wrote in 1959, "that they were even willing to make concessions to religion in the interests of public morality. They were willing to suspend their own disbelief in order to bolster up other people's morals—not their own, for of their own they had no doubt."

In 1995, Kristol acknowledged that some of his colleagues are emulating these Victorian agnostics when he wrote that many "neo-conservatives are not themselves religiously observant—though more and more are coming to be. This leads to accusations by liberal intellectuals of hypocrisy or cold-blooded political instrumentalism. But such accusations miss the point. All political philosophers prior to the twentieth century, regardless of their personal piety or lack thereof, understood the importance of religion in the life of the political community. Neo-conservatives, because of their interest in and attachment to classical (as distinct from contemporary) political philosophy, share this understanding."

A year ago, I asked Kristol after a lecture whether he believed in God or not. He got a twinkle in his eye and responded, "I don't believe in God, I have faith in God." Well, faith, as it says in Hebrews 11:1, "is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen."

But at the recent AEI lecture, journalist Ben Wattenberg asked him the same thing. Kristol responded that "that is a stupid question," and crisply restated his belief that religion is essential for maintaining social discipline. A much younger (and perhaps less circumspect) Kristol asserted in a 1949 essay that in order to prevent the social disarray that would occur if ordinary people lost their religious faith, "it would indeed become the duty of the wise publicly to defend and support religion."

We cannot know the innermost secrets of their hearts, but if these conservative intellectuals are indeed carrying out "the duty of the wise," then they have less faith in their fellow citizens than does the pope. The Vatican, after all, has had occasion to absorb a truth succinctly stated by biologist Paul Gross: "Everybody who has undertaken in the last 300 years to stand against the growth of scientific knowledge has lost." That lesson has a moral: If Darwinian evolution is scientifically true, then we have no choice but to go forward and build as good a society as we can in the light of this truth.

The Vatican also brings to bear the wisdom of St. Augustine, whose confessed life may be understood as an inquiry into nature and grace. "If we come to read anything in Holy Scripture," he wrote 16 centuries ago, "that is in keeping with the faith in which we are steeped, capable of several meanings, we must not by obstinately rushing in, so commit ourselves to any one of them that, when perhaps the truth is more thoroughly investigated, it rightly falls to the ground and we with it." ◆

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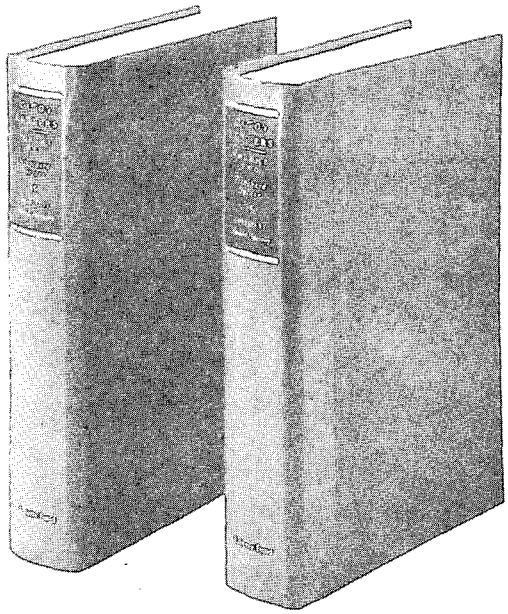

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ARMEY OF THE

Majority Leader Dick Armey may well be the next Speaker of the House. What's his agenda?

By Carolyn Lochhead

Republicans are increasingly pondering the post-Newt age. As one former leadership aide puts it, "Gingrich is dead but he doesn't know it yet." Indeed, disgust with the speaker is so deep among House Republicans that many have nicknamed him "Toast." As the GOP starts looking around for Gingrich's successor, all eyes are falling on House Majority Leader Dick Armey of Irving, Texas.

As second-in-command, Armey has assumed far more power than past majority leaders, making critical decisions about which bills come up and when. First elected to the House in 1984, Armey has carved out a legislative reputation for himself as an outspoken advocate of limited government, lower taxes, and free enterprise.

"I'm acutely aware of who I am," announces Armey in an interview in his Capitol office. "I'm a free-market economist. That is my self-definition. Freedom is my highest value, in life as in politics. I let my economics define my politics, and I'm discouraged by the number of people who I think get it the other way around."

As the current speaker's fortunes wane, Armey's are likely to wax. "He's spent the last six years really building a base of support by doing a lot of fundraising and a lot of campaigning for Republicans who are now in the House," says Stephen Moore, director of fiscal studies at the Cato Institute, who worked with Armey as a staff member of the Joint Economic Committee. "To put it very bluntly, a lot of these guys owe Armey." Indeed, according to *The Hill* newspaper, Armey's political action committee has raised more than $1.6 million, of which $733,000 was given to 150 House candidates during the 1996 election cycle. He donated another $500,000 of his own campaign money to the Republican National Committee. Although Armey denies interest in the speakership, one loyalist says, "He's just killing time until he can really lead."

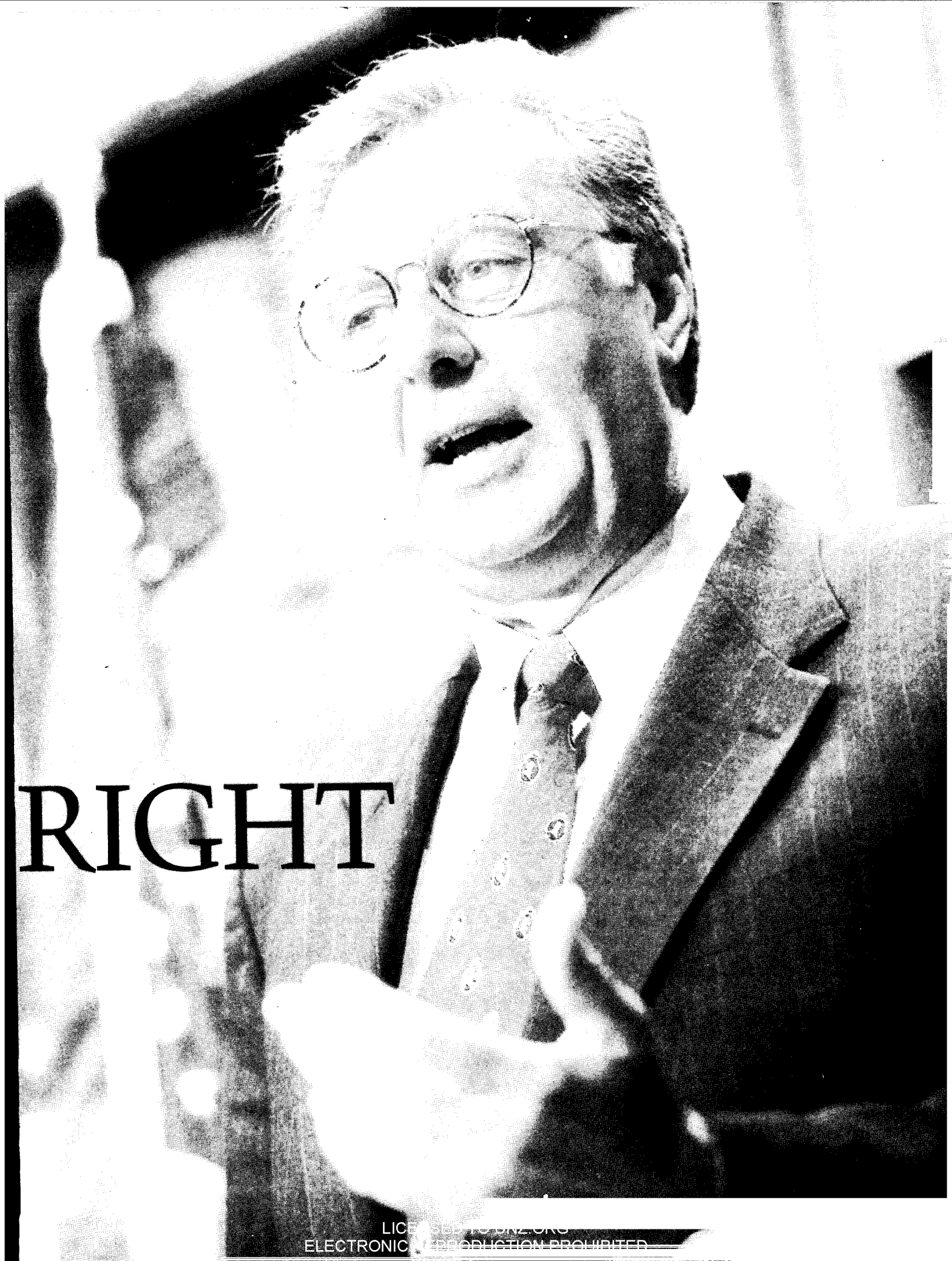
As improbable as it seems, the country is close to having a speaker of the House who publicly claims freedom as his highest value, has worked with some success to shrink government, and considers Ludwig von Mises's *Human Action* and Milton Friedman's *Capitalism and Freedom* important books. How all that would affect an Armey-led House is not immediately clear: The Republicans hold slim majorities in both houses of Congress and can expect little support from a Democratic White House; certainly, any dreams of "revolution" have been banished by political reality. Perhaps more interestingly, there have been some grumblings among conservative Republicans that Armey has "grown in office," that he is beginning to accommodate Washington's reigning left-liberal orthodoxy.

Whatever questions may exist about Armey's dedication to principles, his support among Republicans remains strong and wide—and runs far deeper than his pockets. Since coming to Washington, he has been a consistent spokesman for minimal government, castigating Medicare as a program he would have "no part of in a free world," denouncing corporate and social welfare alike, and relentlessly stumping for a 17 percent flat tax. When the Clinton health plan was unveiled, it was Armey who drew the devastatingly Byzantine chart full of arrows and boxes to illustrate so vividly its bureaucratic morass.

The former economics professor has backed up such fiery rhetoric with legislative substance. Last year, for instance, he played a key role in passing the Freedom to Farm Act, which began phasing out the nation's 60-year-old system of agricultural price supports. Two years ago, Armey led the quick-step march through the Contract with America. A decade ago, he masterminded legislation that resulted in the country's largest reduction of military bases.

Armey's appeal reaches beyond fiscal conservatives, too. His vociferous opposition to abortion has long commended him to social conservatives (even as it distances him from most libertarian conservatives), and his recent conver-

AP / DENNIS COOK



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sion to born-again Christianity only strengthens the tie. About a year and a half ago, "I finally got over being stubborn and prideful and accepted Christ as my savior," says Armey, who adds, "Yeah, it's been a remarkable change in my life." "There's nobody else in the leadership who is going to be able to draw the support that Armey does from conservatives," says Dave Mason, congressional analyst for the Heritage Foundation.

To a significant degree, then, Armey unites fiscally and socially conservative Republicans. He insists that what a spokesperson calls his "renewed" religious commitment doesn't signal a tectonic change in his political philosophy. That is true enough: He has long lent support to social-conservative causes (for instance, he voted for the Defense of Marriage Act and supports the drug war), but his primary legislative focus has always been reducing taxes, spending, and regulations. Too readily perhaps, Armey brushes aside the differences between the Christian and libertarian flanks of the GOP, calling the sides "freedom's choir" because both, he says, share a deep interest in limited government and individual liberty.

To his credit, Armey's current leadership role—much less the possibility of a Speaker Armey—discomfits much of the Washington establishment, even some Republicans. In a recent piece, for instance, *The New Republic* called Armey a "two-note bore." The magazine quoted an unnamed "senior conservative staffer": "Less government, lower taxes, that's about all you ever hear from him....His notion of coming up with a new idea is 'Call Milton Friedman.'" An anonymous moderate House Republican bemoaned Armey, along with fellow Reps. Tom DeLay and John Boehner, as "real reptile conservatives."

Armey has long garnered such glib dismissals—the *Almanac of American Politics* wrote him off (soon after he arrived in Washington) as "hardly likely to be a power in the House." (It has since changed its opinion.) But his 10-year ascent from nowheresville novice to House majority leader reveals a savvy politician and tactician whom people have repeatedly underestimated.

Born in 1940 to an independent grain dealer in North Dakota, the fifth of eight children, Armey was the first in his family to go to college. He began his career as a lineman for a utility company and went on to become chairman of the economics department at the University of North Texas. He ran for Congress in 1984, beating a one-term Democrat by a 1 percent margin. (He has been re-elected ever since by majorities sometimes topping 75 percent.)

In his second term, Armey pulled off a stunning legislative victory with passage of military-base-closing legislation. Base-closing bills had languished for years. But applying public choice theory, he constructed a unique mechanism to overcome parochial log rolling—a base-closing commission whose decisions had to be accepted or rejected by Congress and the president without amendment. He pursued the bill relentlessly with colleagues from both parties, and it became one of the great political successes of modern government, closing over 100 bases around the country.

"It didn't look like it was going anywhere, but once he put it in place, I mean, all of a sudden you have a huge number of bases closed," recalls Rep. Bob Matsui, a California Democrat who fought to preserve an Air Force facility in Sacramento.

When Armey first came to Washington, "He had a strong personal philosophy but he had a lot of trouble getting things done," recalls Bill Frenzel, a former GOP congressman of 20 years. "He sat down to figure out why he had not been successful and really thought it through himself without a lot of help. He decided he had to figure out how to make majorities. In passing the base-closing bill," Frenzel says, Armey "became in the space of less than two years one of the premier legislators in the House."

Armey began his climb to majority leader when he became ranking member of the Joint Economic Committee in 1991. He turned a moribund minority post into a GOP communications center, instituting "rapid response" faxes and issuing reports and charts for Republicans to attack opposition policies.

Disgusted by the 1990 budget deal where President Bush reneged on his read-my-lips pledge not to raise taxes, Armey made a run for the Republican conference chairmanship, the third-ranking slot in the GOP congressional hierarchy. He took on Jerry Lewis, a moderate, deal-making Californian. It was a defining moment in Armey's rise to power. He won by four votes, using a highly organized member-lobbying system, touting his work at the JEC, and arguing that Lewis was part of the old guard that was going to keep Republicans in a permanent minority.

The clincher, recalls former aide Ed Gillespie, came when Armey sent House freshmen a how-to binder called *Hitting the Ground Running.* "It gave new members basic advice on how to set up their offices, their press operations, their staffs, their newsletters, their town meetings. The freshmen got this thing and they said, 'Wow, this is great, this is what I need, this is what I've been looking for,'" Gillespie says. "That same day in the mail they got from Jerry Lewis—the House Republican Conference Chairman—a photo album that had everybody's Christmas cards in it, with pictures of their families. It was the silliest thing. The contrast between what Armey had given them and what Jerry Lewis had given them really kind of sealed the deal for him."

It surprised no one that when the Republicans took over the House in 1995, Armey ran unopposed for majority leader. "There's a substance to him," says John J. Pitney, a political scientist at Claremont McKenna College who has written extensively on the contemporary Republican Party. (Pitney is also a REASON contributing editor.) "He knows what he's doing. He knows his policy, and that does count for something on the Hill. He has a very clear intellectual construct and he works to put that into policy." Far more than most politicians, what drives Armey is his belief in ideas and their power. He's quick to quote Adam Smith, Friedman, and economist Thomas Sowell, and he has written a respected textbook called *Price Theory: A Policy-Welfare Approach.*

Less-sympathetic observers use different terms to convey Armey's style and points of reference. Biographical sketches typically describe him as gruff, rough-edged, a crude ideologue, a "political brawler" of "impolitic bluntness."

"He *is* ideological," grants former aide Gillespie. "But only

in [Washington] is it pejorative that you actually believe in something."

In fact, it's not even necessarily pejorative in Washington. Armey's forthrightness is seen by many members as an asset in a town where evasion is an art form. "Frankly, I would rather deal with a Dick Armey, where you know where he is on the issues and he's true to his program," says Rep. Nancy Pelosi, a liberal California Democrat for whom Armey is an arch ideological enemy. "There's no illusion and no misrepresentation in terms of what he stands for," Pelosi says. "He doesn't mince words."

The same holds true for many Republican moderates—the ones who would ostensibly block Armey's ascent to the speakership. "I've been in meetings where the subject matter was, for example, a woman's right to choose, and he manages very effectively," says Rep. Tom Campbell, a GOP moderate from Silicon Valley. "No one doubts he is on the other side of the issue, but he tells people exactly what he can accomplish, how far he believes compromise is possible," says Campbell, who adds that he is "very high on Armey."

Whether one sees Armey's dedication to core principles as a sign of character or ideological inflexibility, no one disputes that this quality has translated into a fearsome reputation when it comes to legislation.

"The only way Armey ever gives in is when he's crushed," says one close observer. "They have to roll him. He doesn't go into meetings thinking, 'Let me see what I can get, let's get to the middle, let's compromise.' He goes in saying, 'This is what I want to win,' and the only way you beat him is when Democrats are united and there are enough Republicans to peel off to cause us to lose a vote. He's not a player like Gingrich, who wants adoration and can't wait to hear himself talk."

Ironically, of late Armey has had to defend himself against charges that, like Gingrich, his cutting edge has been dulled by power. Certainly, the torpor of the current Congress is in marked contrast to the first Republican-dominated session. It's a fair question: Is the GOP leadership, and Armey in particular, acting smarter these days, or have they just been whipped? Or, as one Republican member of Congress asks, When the choice comes down to cowardice or taking a risk, which route will Armey choose?

"Some of us are worried that Armey has 'grown in office,'" says *The Weekly Standard*'s Bill Kristol, who recently wrote a piece urging rank-and-file insurrection against a "brain-dead Republican Party, cowering in the halls of Congress." Kristol says he understands that Armey, as majority leader, has to be responsible and cautious. "But he also wants to let friends on the outside know that he remains something of a firebrand at heart, and that he's sympathetic with the insurrectionaries," says Kristol.

On at least a surface level, there is a new, more-modulated Dick Armey in office. Gone are the incendiary phrases—he once called Hillary Clinton a "Marxist," ridiculed the Family and Medical Leave Act as "yuppie welfare," and labeled ClintonCare "a Dr. Kevorkian prescription for jobs." In late February, Armey issued a "Time to Get Moving on the 105th [Congressional] Agenda" memo. In it, he downplayed legislative "drama" and urged a "broad communications effort that must begin this year." The message was more caution than action. "We have settled in as the majority party, returning to regular order and recognizing that we have more than a two-year window to undo the policies that for 30 years have undermined families and institutions across America."

But the Texan vigorously disputes that he has "grown in office." He insists that his principles have not changed, but that as majority leader he must play a different role than he did as a simple representative. "You don't hear all the old hot firebrand rhetoric anymore," he concedes. "I know that I have moderated my public discourse, out of consideration for my colleagues. But my line is, just because you don't hear my thunder doesn't mean I'm not there."

Certainly, Armey has reason to cool divisive rhetoric. The GOP majority is razor-thin in the House, where Republicans outnumber Democrats 227 to 210. As majority leader, Armey must get 218 votes from moderates and conservatives, operating with a nine-vote margin of error. (The spread in the Senate, where Republicans outnumber Democrats 55 to 45, is five votes.) Clinton remains president, and despite talk of leaving a legacy, seems no more willing than before the election to take any unpopular steps on the budget. Under such circumstances, particularly with Gingrich still leading the House, Armey can do little more than push for smaller victories—such as reforming public housing, consolidating job-training programs, and trimming corporate welfare—until the larger ones grow within reach.

Far more than most politicians, what drives Armey is his belief in ideas and their power. He's quick to quote Adam Smith, Milton Friedman, and Thomas Sowell, and he has written a respected textbook called *Price Theory: A Policy-Welfare Approach.*

"At every juncture you've got to make a decision," he says, explaining his approach to legislation. "If I'm going to take this course of action, is the policy gain more than offset by the political loss? [In the last session], we were getting political losses and no policy gain. That's like saying, 'I'm ready to give my life to have all debts and no assets.' So we have to be smarter."

Armey points to the two government shutdowns in 1995 as

examples of "big" political mistakes that led to no policy gains. "We telegraphed punches that sometimes we didn't even have to throw," he says. And, in the months leading up to the showdown, "we had Republicans out in the world talking about shutting the government down. Then we had the unbelievable circumstance where the president vetoed the bill, shut down the government, and we got credit for it. Why? Because the president never talked about it until the day it passed, and then he only said one thing: 'The Republicans are shutting down the government.'"

"The challenge facing Dick Armey," observes political scientist Pitney, "is that the strategies and tactics for winning a majority are not necessarily the same for exercising power. It's one thing to be confrontational when you're in the minority and another when you have to hold together a very narrow majority."

Armey is well aware of the difference. Indeed, as majority leader, he may now spend as much time forming a consensus within his own party as he does sparring with the opposition. He says he must serve as an "honest broker between the warring factions" within the party, which means scaling back the legislative agenda to areas of common agreement. "Nobody in the room doubts where I am on [any issue]. But they also need to know that I'm going to be there to facilitate them working out a point where they can stand with 218 votes on that point. Now that probably will not get me 100 percent of what I want, but from my personal point of view, it gets the ball someplace down the field," says Armey, alluding to William Bennett's observation that in politics you are either moving the ball on your opponents or they are moving the ball on you. "As long as I'm moving the ball on them," says Armey, "I think there's progress being made."

That said, it's not immediately clear that the House Republicans are gaining much yardage or even that they are headed toward the goal line of less government and more freedom. Certainly, the goals envisioned by Armey these days are a far cry from the heady early days of the Republican "revolution" when a dramatic downsizing of government seemed imminent. Armey insists he has not walked away from smaller-ticket items such as abolishing the National Endowment for the Arts and reducing the estate tax, or bigger-ticket items such as Social Security reform and the flat tax. The reality of leading, however, has changed the time line somewhat. "I still intend to get there," he says, "but I'm smart enough to know that I ain't going to get there overnight."

One lesson that the majority leader has learned is the need to explain an agenda to the public. Voters, he says, have to understand what Congress is doing and why, whether it's ending farm subsidies or introducing vouchers in Medicare. "You've got to do it in a methodical way, which is a hard concept for those of us who waited forever and ever to take over," says one Armey loyalist. So, for example, Armey says the time to have a "responsible public discourse" on Social Security has not yet arrived. Medicare, however, is now a different story, despite the whipping the GOP took on the issue before and during the last election. Because the system's insolvency is imminent, says Armey, serious debate is possible.

On the one hand, such a rationale comes dangerously close to justifying inaction and failure. Consider Armey's analysis of his opposition to last year's minimum-wage increase. "When I jumped up and said I will fight the minimum-wage increase with every fiber in my being, what I did—and frankly completely unnecessarily—was I gave [opponents] a sound bite," he says. "And that sound bite, remember, was not a policy victory, that was a political victory [for my opponents] that resulted in a policy loss. We allowed ourselves to be drawn on the political field of battle when we didn't have to be." Perhaps. But if a Ludwig von Mises–reading, Milton Friedman–quoting free-market majority leader does not publicly speak out against a minimum-wage increase, who will?

On the other hand, however, Armey's new approach could potentially lead to more productive, if less bombastic, legislative sessions. With arts funding, for instance, he predicts that as Congress searches for places to trim spending—a goal largely embraced by the voting public—"People will find their own way to the National Endowment for the Arts," he says, noting that the last Congress halved the NEA's budget. "But if I take them on head first, then I'm just some troglodyte who is opposed to art. And I lose that debate."

Similarly, Armey stresses that, as a majority party, Republicans must use new strategies to counter Democratic attempts to expand the welfare state through such warm and fuzzy proposals as mammogram requirements or expanded health care spending on children. Every time Democrats propose that the government provide some new entitlement such as a three-day hospital stay for new mothers, says Armey, the traditional conservative response has been to denounce the plan as costly and ill-considered. It's an argument, he says, that Democrats will always win, "because they've got love and compassion and heart on their side." What his side must do, says Armey, is recast its positions in terms that reach the heart as well as the head.

He uses Superfund as an example. Rather than harp on what a disaster it is and try to eliminate it, says Armey, Republicans plan to talk about doing a better job of protecting children from toxic waste. "We've poured $34 billion over 16 years into Superfund and got damned few clean sites out of it," he notes. "The traditional Republican way of going about that discussion is to say, 'Boy, we're really going to get those trial lawyers—they've been profiteering off this.' So everybody says, 'Oh, I get it. Republicans are mad at trial lawyers.' Who wants to get excited about that? So we say instead, 'We want to clean up these sites, we want to *fix* them.' If we talk in those terms, everybody says, 'Yeah, let's go do that.' And as trial lawyers see this train going down the track, they're going to jump up and say, 'No, no, no, don't do that.' They'll show themselves [as] the bad guys in a way that will be recognized."

What Republicans must do, says Armey, is to move beyond simple nay-saying toward presenting positive alternatives to past failures, whether in the environment, public safety, education, or anything else. The public, says Armey, wants a cleaner environment, safer communities, and better schools; to be successful, Republicans must demonstrate a better way to get them.

Public housing is an obvious target for Republicans, he says. Governmental failure is so obvious and so widely conceded—by the public, by Democrats, by big-city mayors, and by tenants themselves—that Republicans can step in with alternatives. Armey is calling for a repeal of the Housing Act of 1937 and a movement toward more local, flexible control and greater accountability on the part of both tenants and management. There needs to be more latitude, he says, in evicting bad tenants and rewarding good ones.

Reducing corporate welfare, expanding medical savings accounts, reforming product liability laws, deregulating utilities, reforming taxes—each offers similar possibilities and each has widespread political and public support, says Armey. Once enacted, such policies also can widen public experience with—and embrace of—more-market-oriented approaches to problems for which Democrats have always said bigger government was the only answer.

Armey's new tactics will be put to the test during the budget battle looming this summer. By politely receiving Clinton's plan and letting the press attack it, the Republicans are already off to a better start than last year, he says. "Rather than have Dick Armey jump up and say the president's budget is as phony as a $3.00 bill, the press says, 'We've got a problem—it's got net tax increases. We've got a problem—his plan for Medicare won't work.'" If the press reveals these things, he says, the GOP is in a better negotiating position to cut overall spending.

"We're still going to end up with a budget that we have prepared," Armey says. "There is nobody that I know of in our majority, House or Senate, who says, Let's go with a wink and a nod again. But in the meantime, why not have the public appreciate the way we're going about it, rather than thinking we're a bunch of mean-spirited naysayers just looking for a chance to criticize the president? Most of our folly is borne out of own sense of insecurity and impatience. We want everybody to know our virtues and to know it right now, today. And we live in fear that they may never know. So we try to force it. The truth will come out."

Maybe—although truth and the political process typically run in different directions. While the press has raised questions about the Clinton's budget, they are likely to pick apart the Republican alternatives as well. What happens then? Will the Republicans acquiesce in the face of press criticism and a relatively popular president who has demonstrated an ability to punch all the right sympathy buttons, such as increased funding for child care and tax credits for college tuition? The Republicans have long failed to put a human face on their plans to cut spending and it is far from certain they will succeed this time around. Given the reality of the GOP's narrow congressional majority and the general consensus—however vague and abstract—that government spending must be reined in, the best-case scenario for this budget includes modest spending cuts and perhaps some minor, heavily targeted tax relief.

The next few months may shape up as the most important in Dick Armey's political career. If he is able to engineer even modest success on his terms, it could prove enough to kick him up to the speaker's chair (or to consolidate greater power within his current post).

Faced with the wild ride of Gingrich's speakership, many Republicans now concede it was a mistake to centralize so much power in one person. Instead of a giant, they are now simply looking for a tall man. "Our misperception of this whole thing now that we're in the majority is that the speaker or majority leader or any of our legislative leaders ought to be the Ronald Reagans of the 21st century," says one high-ranking House Republican. "In looking for the perfect combination of legislator, philosopher, strategist, vote counter, TV talking head, best-selling author, and movie personality, we're overstating the job description." When former Democratic leaders held less-overwhelming majorities, says the member, they saw their main job as getting a majority on any given day, a strategy that worked pretty well to slowly secure the sort of government they sought.

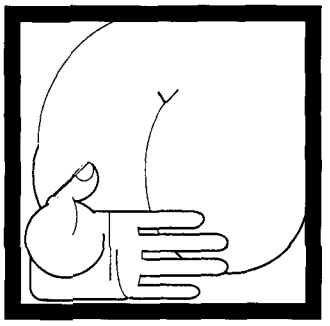
Oddly, it may turn out that a figure with a reputation as an uncompromising ideologue such as Armey will prove to be the sort of leader who can most effectively take some small steps toward reducing government. When it gets down to a battle of inches, a Speaker Armey might prove more likely to stick to his game plan of less government and lower taxes. Certainly, such principles provide a philosophical consistency that Gingrich has always lacked. One assumes there would be no courting of Alec Baldwin and the NEA, no intoxication with faddish futurism, no sudden abandonment of tax cuts.

Improbably enough, if the Republicans slowly dismantle the entitlement state one step at a time—a process that will require intense conferencing and tactful negotiation—it may well be because they elect a speaker best known for his philosophical inflexibility and reactionary reliance on a "two-note" mantra of less government and lower taxes.

As majority leader, Armey must play a different role than he did as a simple representative. "I know that I have moderated my public discourse, out of consideration for my colleagues," he concedes. "But my line is, just because you don't hear my thunder doesn't mean I'm not there."

Contributing Editor Carolyn Lochhead is Washington correspondent for the San Francisco Chronicle.

Adieu to the



As the artistic regime shifts, realism, rhyme, and representation make a comeback.

Tom Wolfe is holding his Chelsea audience spellbound with what seems the unlikeliest of stories. Spotlighted in a bare, black "performance space" deep in downtown Manhattan, Wolfe is evoking the careers of a trio of mostly forgotten 19th-century French painters. The story's certainly entertaining, thanks to Wolfe's talent for such narrative. But what's *really* interesting is his reason for telling it: Wolfe is here to celebrate the approaching fulfillment of a prophecy of his, and to announce the end of a cultural epoch.

First, though, his story. "Exactly a hundred years ago," Wolfe is saying, "there was a survey taken by a French newspaper—they used to *love* to take this kind of survey—in which they asked leading French art dealers, critics, curators: Who would be the French artists of the 19th century who would still be the giants of art in the year 1997? By the standards of that day, it was a huge survey. And the results were, number one, Adolphe William Bouguereau; second, Jean-Louis Ernest Meissonier; and, third, Léon Gérôme. They were looked upon as the giants."

Who? Wait, there's more. "Even after the era of Andy Warhol, who left an estate of $510 million, we cannot begin to comprehend the scale on which these artists—Bouguereau, Meissonier, Gérôme—lived." Wolfe sketches in some detail. "Two- and three-story-high studios. Belgian hangings on all the walls. There were always Persian rugs strewn wherever you could strew one: on top of the piano, on top of the balcony railing, on the bed, everywhere, even on the floor."

Such Belle Epoque sumptuousness reflected the near total cultural power these painters wielded; it derived from canvases which were not only admired, purchased at staggering sums (Meissonier, Wolfe notes, was once offered a million francs just to sign his name), and studied by crowds of intense young

BY KANCHAN LIMAYE

Avant-Garde

artists; they were considered to have carried French art to unsurpassable heights of draftsmanship, composition, and color. Bouguereau's technical ability still impresses Wolfe. "God, what a master of silk folds! He could show you an archangel with a sheet of paper in his hand: You'd want to eat the paper, it was so rich!"

Then, poof. "By 1920, all these people were forgotten. They had become, overnight in terms of the passage of history, zeros, grand zeros in art history." Why that happened—the coming of the various movements of modernism, from the Berlin Secession to Cubism—is not Wolfe's subject. Regime shifting is.

"The 'Regime Shift,'" says Wolfe, "is a term that I'm borrowing from economics. It refers to a situation in which suddenly the rules are changed. And when that happens, suddenly a lot of assets are lost, chaos results....Well, such things oddly enough can happen in art. Not quite as rapidly, but they have happened extremely rapidly."

Wolfe believes that such a cultural shift is occurring right now. "I think it was 1985 or 1986, I was giving a talk at a museum out on Long Island. And the title of the talk was, 'Picasso, the Bouguereau of the Year 2020.' And this was really a prediction of a Regime Shift." Wolfe's prophecy went totally unnoticed at the time. "The only reward I had was a diatribe at the end of the talk," he recalls, by "an extremely angry man."

That was then. Tonight in Chelsea there are no angry diatribes. On the contrary, most of those gathered agree with Wolfe, and many of them are painters, poets, and composers who have been working for years with much the same overthrow in mind. So did it happen? Is Picasso's fate really on the way to becoming that of Bouguereau? Is the art regime actually shifting? "I can sense it here," Wolfe says. "This very festival is a sign of it."

"This very festival" was staged by the Derriere Guard, a loosely organized group of painters, poets, and composers, founded last year, who celebrate technique as artistically liberating, and beauty as a universal value. For four days, from March 20–23, they exhibited paintings and architectural drawings, read poetry, performed concerts, held symposia, and questioned the assumptions underlying the arts of the 20th century. Their activities were a study in cultural dynamism, a picture of the art world in flux. Tom Wolfe was not originally part of the program, but was sufficiently intrigued, when he heard about it, to offer to speak. Indeed, although the celebrated essayist, inventor of journalisms, and best-selling novelist commands speaking fees in the tens of thousands of dollars, he volunteered to address the Derriere Guard's audience for free.

This only added to the event's air of cultural warfare. For one thing, the Derriere Guard's founder, Stefania de Kenessey—a classical composer who teaches at the New School for Social Research—staged the show at a historical mecca of the leftist avant-garde scene, The Kitchen on West 19th Street. (The *Village Voice* describes The Kitchen as being "for 25 years a living synonym for avant-garde.") The 270-seat space earned its bad-boy image when it became home to the spoken-word and performance-art pieces that dominated the downtown scene in the 1980s and early 1990s. Among these were the performances of Karen Finley, which enraged Republicans and helped lead to cuts in federal arts funding. The Kitchen's lobby even features a Finley monologue on a pair of large bronze plaques.

Composer Stefania de Kenessey: founder of the Derriere Guard

"I was surprised I wasn't laughed or condescended-to out of the room," says de Kenessey of the moment two years ago when she presented her idea to The Kitchen.

De Kenessey's proposal for the festival explained that, "What was once revolutionary is now the ruling orthodoxy...the avant-garde has become the status quo. A new generation of artists are actively re-engaging history...they neither regress to the distant past nor yearn for a now vanished world; instead, they strike out in an altogether different direction. By fusing tradition with innovation, the Western with the Eastern, they offer a radically new alternative for the art of the new millennium." She presented the proposal on stationery that had a logo of a hand shielding a pair of buttocks. The Kitchen agreed immediately.

New York artists who participated in the Derriere Guard Festival included the Absolute Ensemble, a group of young classically trained musicians who play everything from Mozart to Frank Zappa to Black Sabbath on classical instruments, and incorporate visual art, film, and performance elements into their presentations; 25 Realist painters who share a commitment to representational work, including Steven Assael, Martha Mayer Earlebacher, Vincent Desiderio, and Wade Schuman; several sculptors; the internationally acclaimed Ahn Trio, three young South Korean sisters trained at Juilliard; verse poets such as Dana Gioia, Tom Disch (perhaps better known as a science fiction writer), R.S. Gwynne, Charles Martin, and Molly Peacock; and

STEPHANIE BERGER

New York architects Richard Franklin Sammons, Anne Fairfax, and David Mayernick.

In another symbolic challenge, de Kenessey intentionally scheduled the Derriere Guard Festival to open on the same day the Whitney Museum of American Art was opening its 1997 Biennial. This was not an opening volley in the cultural war; Realist painters, including a number of those exhibiting at The Kitchen, have been in open conflict with the Whitney for some time. Their continuing argument about art is one front in what is turning into a much broader engagement.

On September 29, 1995, painter Steven Assael stood on the steps of the Whitney before more than 200 protesters. For them, the Whitney was a Xanadu of pierced bodies, vomit displays, and other forms of avant-garde art; a symbol of what had become—in a supreme irony—Establishment cultural orthodoxy. He and his fellow painters in the Realist movement, though hardly speaking with one voice on all aesthetic matters, had put aside their differences to protest the Whitney's prejudice against their style of art, much of which makes use of classical techniques.

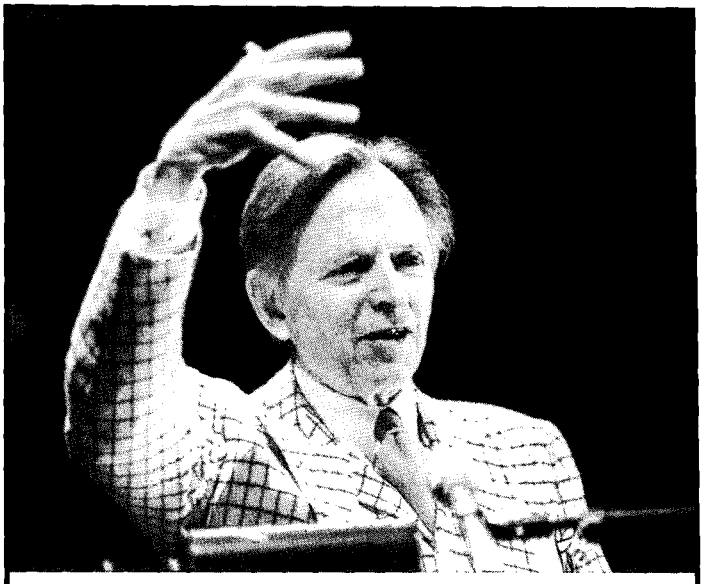
One of the country's most powerful arts institutions, the Whitney's notoriety stems from its infamous 1993 Biennial exhibition, which, as usual, professed to survey the American art scene. The 1993 Biennial sought to right such socio-aesthetic wrongs as, for example, Jewish homosexual artists having to submerge the iconography of their religious heritage—or hide their sexual preferences—to get into prestigious galleries. Other works in the 1993 show drew attention to the ills of colonialism or sexism. Huge blocks of chocolate pointed to the horrors of anorexia and bulimia in a society based on "white-male hierarchy." In 1995, the Biennial again focused on shock-value avant-gardism that some audiences found more obscure and unintelligible than shocking.

But at the Realist protest, painters took the microphone to describe their alienation from what remained of 20th-century modernism. "There is a renewed interest in a realism that blends the tradition of the past with our pure contemporary content," Assael said that day.

Assael and his fellow painters, like the poets, architects, and composers they joined in March at The Kitchen, are harbingers of a new cultural development: They represent the emergence of a third front in the nation's long-waged culture wars—one that its adherents hope will render the rigidly polarized debate between right-wing conservatives and left-wing avant-gardists defunct.

That cultural battle has been raging in universities over the literary canon, as Shakespeareans have fought multiculturalists. In 1995, the battle broke out at Lincoln Center over the jazz canon, with blues-and-swing purists like Albert Murray and Wynton Marsalis fighting avant-garde musicians like Cecil Taylor. This past February, a skirmish over race, representation, and cultural power in the theater occurred at New York's Town Hall between playwright August Wilson and Robert Brustein, critic and director of the American Repertory Theater.

In virtually all the manifestations of the culture wars, the right has favored tradition over evolution, and Western culture over multiculturalism. The left has usually favored gender-, class-, and race-based analyses, and excoriated the West for colonialism and bigotry. For both sides the stakes have been high: The winners hope to write the history of the arts in America, and control the nation's cultural future.



Tom Wolfe predicted the demise of the avant-garde a decade ago. Now he revels in its presumed death throes.

Enter, now, a group of artists and scholars who reject the ethnocentrism of the right, the demonization of the West and identity politics of the left, and the dogmatism of both. For them, great art can include—but ultimately transcends—political goals. They include Christians and atheists; WASPs and recent immigrants; blacks, whites, Hispanics, and Asians; straights and gays. The cultural battle lines are being redrawn.

A week after 1995's Realist protest, Assael faced Whitney director David Ross in a radio debate. "Sometimes the present created the future by breaking the shackles of the past," he said. "But sometimes the past created the future by breaking the shackles of the present." Assael was borrowing the words of University of Texas at Dallas Professor Frederick Turner, words describing the apparently cyclical nature of cultural movements. Like Turner, Assael hopes that a decaying modernism will lead to an aesthetic rebirth.

Turner, in fact, was a key guest at the Derriere Guard Festival. Dubbed by *Kirkus Reviews* as "Apollo to Camille Paglia's Dionysus," Turner is, like Paglia, an intellectual maverick, but lacks her sensationalistic strategies crafted to garner media attention. Like Wolfe, Turner has also prophesied a cultural shift. In his 1995 book, *The Culture of Hope*, he wrote that "a growing number of artists in various fields" have rejected modernist orthodoxy and, like the World War I–era artists who broke with their aesthetic establishments, "are preparing their Armory Show." Turner's phrase for those artists who are attempting to shift the cultural regime is the "radical center."

Apart from having published five books of poetry—including

STEPHANIE BERGER

two book-length epic poems—and a novel, Turner served as editor of *The Kenyon Review*, one of the most influential literary magazines in America, in the early 1980s. (He is also a contributing editor to REASON.) *The Culture of Hope* serves as an artistic manifesto (some attendees at the Derriere Guard Festival had the book under their arms). In that book, Turner calls on the artists of today to bridge the gap between the elitist avant-garde world and the general public, and celebrates the conflation of high and low culture which is now occurring.

According to Turner, artists who fall under the "radical center's" umbrella because they exploit world classical traditions include Frederick Hart, sculptor of *Three Soldiers* at the Vietnam Veterans Memorial and *Ex Nihilo* at the Washington Cathedral; earthworks sculptor James Turrell; Tom Wolfe, who has criticized the self-absorption of modern fiction and called for realistic storytelling; composer Philip Glass; "world music" practitioners; Peter Brook and his "ethnodrama," which makes use of Kathakali, Japanese Noh Theater, and ballet; dance troupes such as Sankai Juku, Momix, and Mark Morris; and pop artists such as Laurie Anderson and David Byrne.

Some of these artists, such as Frederick Hart and Tom Wolfe, are aware of the cultural trends they embody, and consciously support a specific cultural movement. Others may not be aware of the larger trend. Some, like Laurie Anderson or Philip Glass, have long been classified as "avant-garde" due to their experimentalism, yet they also use classical traditions.

Turner describes the "death of the avant-garde"—a trendy topic among many academics in the disciplines of English and cultural studies, most of whom agree that the avant-garde *has* died. But he also deals with the question, "What's next?" And he suggests answers for the questions that preoccupy artists: Why create art? For whom? What kind? In response, he has developed a philosophy of the arts based on what he calls "natural classicism." Based on recent advances in neuroscience and Turner's own collaborative research with neuropsychologist Ernst Poppel, it suggests that human beings are biologically hard-wired to appreciate the classical genres of art—visual representation, narrative, melody in music, verse in poetry, and dramatic mimesis.

Frederick Turner's research with neuropsychologist Ernst Poppel suggests that human beings are biologically hard-wired to appreciate the classical genres of art—visual representation, narrative, melody in music, verse in poetry, and dramatic mimesis.

It is no coincidence, Turner argues, that these genres manifest themselves in the arts of all world traditions. Artists of the future, he predicts, will eschew the cynical and desperate mannerisms of postmodernism, and exploit these multiple classical vocabularies to make art of lasting value. These artists will tap into the fundamental artistic principles that are recognizable across cultural barriers. During the 20th century the artist was commonly perceived as a denunciatory prophet, whose main goal was to expose the hypocrisies of the bourgeoisie—a notion that still dominates the avant-garde art world. Turner's "radical center" envisions artists as pan-cultural shamans whose purpose is to dramatize the multiple voices in a culture, bourgeois or otherwise.

Turner's been in the cultural trenches for decades. In 1981, he met with two other poets, Dick Allen and Fred Feirstein, at a corner table at the Minetta Lane Tavern in Greenwich Village. All were disturbed by the political dogmatism that they believed was stifling the poetry world. At that moment, as they saw it, confessional poetry was in; meter, rhyme, and formal verse were out. Poetry about the poets was in; poetry in which poets stepped outside themselves to cast light on the lives of others was out. Anne Sexton was in; Shakespeare was out, and if you didn't agree, you were branded an anti-feminist.

So the poets, two of whom had teaching appointments at universities, drew up a manifesto for a movement they called "Expansive Poetry," to break down these restrictive political barriers. From its roots rose today's New Formalists, poets who believe, as did the Expansive Poets, that adhering to forms can liberate artists, rather than restrict them. In this sense, the poetry movement coincidentally runs parallel to the Realist movement among painters. New Formalism has gained much more institutional acceptance since its first stirrings in the early 1980s, and is now accepted in the academic world as a legitimate movement.

One day in 1994, after a lecture at The Art Students' League in New York, several Realist artists held a meeting to discuss the possibility of staging a protest outside the Whitney. There, poet Feirstein met Realist painter Steven Assael. After listening to the proceedings, Feirstein told Assael that they shared some key beliefs, especially the value of technique and the belief that subject matter should transcend the artist. That meeting began what has become a continuing association between the poets and the painters.

Feirstein knew something about demonstrating, and he and his wife helped Assael organize the Whitney protest. About 40 Realist artists have begun meeting each weekend in Hoboken, New Jersey, to hammer out group goals.

The poets too have been public in their assault on orthodoxy. Last December, for example, Bruce Bawer, a poet and essayist known for his advocacy of family-values gay domesticity, and a leader in the gay-moderate movement, stood before some 40 New York literati, college students, and passers-by in the Chelsea branch of Barnes & Noble. They'd gathered for a reading to celebrate the publication of *Rebel Angels: 25 Poets of the New Formalism*. Fifty copies of the scarlet book punctuated the shelf

behind Bawer, like pop icons in a Warhol painting. Standing at the podium, Bawer said, "When I was in grad school in the early '80s, formal verse wasn't allowed, wasn't done. I kept writing them privately and stashing them away somewhere." His smile betrayed a guilty glee.

Derriere Guard Exhibit: Its members attempt to engage a wide audience rather than creating works that only serve the interests of other artists.

In the back of the crowd sat young political analyst and novelist Michael Lind. Late of *The New Yorker*, Lind personifies why the old distinction between left-wing avant-gardists and right-wing classicists is becoming useless. In his recent book, *Up From Conservatism*, he describes his political disillusionment with the right and his migration toward the left. But Lind is also a closet narrative poet—Houghton Mifflin published his first epic poem, *The Alamo*, in March. By writing an epic, Lind challenges the assumption that classicism is a right-wing phenomenon.

In the afterword to *The Alamo*, Lind writes, "formerly insurgent Modernism had become the intolerant establishment, and a prejudice against not only epic, but any kind of coherent narrative verse, was the orthodoxy in the academy, publishing, and the prestige press." He points out that in recent years, poets like Vikram Seth (whose book-length poem *The Golden Gate* was a bestseller in England), Frederick Turner, Dana Gioia, Mark Jarman, David Mason, Robert McDowell, and others who form the New Narrative movement, have broken through the publishing barrier.

Lind says that he, like others, mourns what he sees as the contrast between the robustness of American vernacular culture and the preciosity of Atlantic seaboard literati and academics. He considers writing an epic in colloquial language as an attempt to bridge the gap between the intelligentsia and the larger public—in this sense, it is a response to Turner's call-to-arms for the artists of the future.

As a proponent of "national liberalism," Lind is one more example of the movement's political heterogeneity. When pressed about their political views, most of the artists resist affiliating themselves with any group. Lind admires Truman and Johnson; poet Sydney Lea says he is a Southern Democrat, or a conservative uncomfortable with some conservative views. Fred Feirstein bemoans the loss of idealism and optimism of the Kennedy era. Tom Disch was for years a contributor to the left-wing opinion magazine, *The Nation*. Tom Wolfe has been known to attend neo-conservative fundraisers, but satirizes both North Carolina gay-bashers and news media liberals in his latest novella, *Ambush at Fort Bragg*. De Kenessey, poet Dana Gioia, and Turner say they see no heroes on the left or the right.

"The right's loony to try and make cultural values policy, but I don't trust the government as much as Mike Lind," says Gioia. He continues, "Politics has become a dreary swamp. The right and left are no longer useful concepts."

De Kenessey says, "Most people in this movement are on some level outside the current mainstream. That's what we have in common politically."

Indeed, these artists' unwillingness to align themselves politically with either the left or the right has left them vulnerable to having both politics and motives imputed to them by those who dismiss their work.

"What movement?!" demands David Ross, director of the Whitney, when asked about the Realists in a telephone interview. "There's no such thing!" When reminded that at least 200 Realist artists demonstrated outside the Whitney less than 18 months earlier, he backtracks. "I've always had respect for the artist's plight," he says of the protest. "We even gave them an electric outlet for their equipment."

Ross expresses great skepticism of the contemporary Realists. "That sort of hackneyed academic painting takes an *enormous* amount of talent and work," he says. "But to go back to copying Leonardo is not art."

He continues: "I admire them just like I admire people that can sing beautifully. It's a real gift. But that alone doesn't make you a great artist." His voice rises, sounding increasingly agitated. "They're old-fashioned, totally out of touch with the issues of the day. I'm interested in art that's wrestling with the history of ideas, and they fail to deal with it! We've had two major world wars, the worst genocides in world history, and many other events that they ignore."

Ross says he has not seen any of Steven Assael's work, but he tells a reporter in her early 20s, "I used to be just like you when I was your age. I had the same questions about art that you do. Listen, you shouldn't be interested in these people. They're just a bunch of crypto-Nazi conservative bullshitters. They're feeding you a line of bullshit! We just had a great conference with Asian-American artists who were concerned with issues of representation at the Whitney. Do a story on that."

When asked to respond to the contention of many contem-

SETH JOSEPH WEINE

porary Realists that the Whitney's brand of avant-garde art lacks spirituality, Ross becomes enraged. "I'm sick of hearing these Realists say their work is 'affirming'! It's not affirming, it's sappy! Art isn't about making pretty pictures to put in people's homes," he says. "They're rebelling against the age of cynicism? Well, it's not cynicism! It's smartness! It's lack of naivete!" By this point, Ross's voice is shaking with anger. "They think they're special? Well, they are special. If they get a show of their own, great. I'm eager to see what it is, and then we can have a real dialogue," Ross says. "Let them put on their own show. Then I'll accept that there's a *movement.*"

Over on the aesthetic right, Hilton Kramer, art critic for the *New York Observer* and editor of *The New Criterion,* a conservative arts quarterly, is equally skeptical, despite the fact that he too abhors postmodernism. "I have no interest in that group," he says of the disgruntled Realist painters. "They have no solid aesthetic foundation. The Whitney exhibits plenty of representational work. These people are just small potatoes staging publicity stunts."

No solid aesthetic foundation? In 1974, a group of Realist painters staged an exhibition at Yale. What the critic-in-chief of *The New York Times* wrote of their exhibit was that realism lacks "a persuasive theory," and that to lack that "is to lack something crucial—the means by which our experience of individual works is joined to our understanding of the values they signify." The critic was the same Hilton Kramer, who has again cited essentially the same theoretical objections to the art of the Realists that demonstrated outside the Whitney, some of whom were part of the Derriere Guard Festival.

"*Aha!*" wrote a journalist after he'd stumbled across Kramer's phrase in 1974. To the journalist it was a moment of cultural epiphany. He wrote of the phrase, "the seemingly innocuous *obiter dicta,* the words in passing, that give the game away." He translated them this way: "In short, frankly, these days, without a theory to go with it, I can't *see* a painting."

That journalist was Tom Wolfe, who upon reading Kramer's view wrote *The Painted Word* (1975), Wolfe's famous account of the New York avant-garde, from cubism to abstract expressionism to pop art and beyond, and how it became an establishment in the first place—the very establishment, in fact, that the artists gathered for the Derriere Guard Festival are seeking to challenge.

Twenty years later, Wolfe and Kramer meet again, more or less, on the same turf. This time, however, there is evidence that their old argument about art—what it is and how to see it—is approaching resolution. "Things don't have to happen at the end of centuries," as Wolfe tells his Kitchen audience. "But somehow they do."

"So I made this great prediction," Wolfe is saying, "'Picasso: The Bouguereau of the year 2020.'" But he admits to his audience, a mixed crowd of stylishly dressed uptowners, baseball-capped high schoolers, and women in black leather downtown chic, that "my prediction began to look very bad." Picassos brought fabulous prices at Sotheby's; the "art birds" began showing up at the auctions, "lissome young women with these glossy shanks which they keep crossing and uncrossing."

And then the Picasso books started coming out. "All of them had the same premise," he says: "Here's the greatest artist of the 20th century. The only question is, was he a good man or a bad man? And Arianna Huffington in her book said he was a very bad man. Look at the way he treated women! But even she said: Well, he was the greatest artist of the 20th century. And then there was John Richardson's book...in which he says, Well, you know, for the greatest artist of the 20th century he wasn't such a bad man...."

Then, Wolfe says, he picked up the December 16 issue of *The New Yorker* and saw "an absolutely fascinating review" by Adam Gopnik of Richardson's second volume about Picasso's life, "in which Gopnik says, Who cares whether he's a good man or a bad man? He's such a bad artist! Look at these images he's famous for: These harlequins. These saltimbanques. These minotaurs. These fat nudes. Bullfighters." Wolfe grins as he continues describing the Gopnik piece: "Gopnik says all these images were stale when he used them, when he started picking them up. And he says: Look at this Blue Period. Why are all these people blue? Because they're sad. He said, boy, talk about originality."

"Anybody can write whatever they want," Wolfe admits, but the point is that Gopnik's very beat is "what the word is in Paris. And the word in Paris right now—and this is what interested me so much about it—is that Picasso is a fraud. That Picasso is as confining as these academic artists—Bouguereau, Meissonier, Gérôme—any of them could ever possibly have been with their emphasis upon technique."

"I'm sick of hearing these Realists say their work is 'affirming'! It's not affirming, it's sappy!" says Whitney Museum director David Ross. "Art isn't about making pretty pictures to put in people's homes," he says. "Let them put on their own show. Then I'll accept that there's a movement."

The prices for Picassos haven't dropped yet, but Wolfe allows himself his vision of art's future anyway. "We can expect—those of us who are around to take art history courses in the year 2020—to see the glee with which the professors [present] the *Demoiselles d'Avignon.*" Imagine the reactions, Wolfe tells the audience. "They took it seriously! Look at those women with no hair! Look at those hands that look like duck beaks! Look at those faces with two eyes on the same side of the nose!

"And the classes will snicker, and professors will have the time of their lives." ◆

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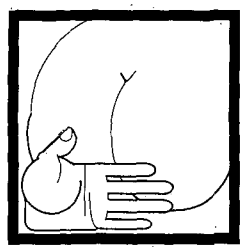
Money Talking Art



Does cash corrupt or communicate?

By Charles Paul Freund

Perhaps the most interesting part of the Derriere Guard Festival was the symposium dedicated to "Selling Out: Art, Audiences, and Money in America." It was here, where panelists grappled publicly with the sort of uncomfortable art-meets-money questions that aesthetes usually try to avoid, that the event most made noises like a revolutionary art uprising. Participants challenged the status quo—that filthy lucre automatically corrupts art—and suggested that, as systems of mutual exchange, markets and art have much in common.

The panel kicked off with a poem set to music, words by Dana Gioia, music by Paul Salerni. "Money," sang soprano Debra Field, "the long green,/cash, stash, rhino, jack,/or just plain dough." The same language turns up in Gioia's provocative essay, "Business and Poetry," which explores the work of poets who were also businessmen, such as T.S. Eliot, James Dickey, and especially Wallace Stevens. (It was Stevens who once said—without elaboration—that "Money is a kind of poetry.") "Money. You don't know where it's been,/but you put it where your mouth is./And it talks," finished Field.

Then the panel began "Selling Out" by exploring the multiple meanings of the phrase. There's selling out, said moderator Daniel L. Selden, which means "selling yourself to some program," or "capitulating" intellectually or artistically; and then there's selling out, which has "the theatrical sense of selling the house out" to ticket buyers. What, Selden wanted to know from his panel, was the relationship between these meanings? Must you be guilty of the first to achieve the second?

Selden's day job is as a classics professor, so thinking rhetorically is a professional reflex. But it was a good transition from the poem. Both poetry and rhetoric, as Selden might have noted, once shared the same status. They both used to be "arts." Of course, rhetoric has long ceased to be one, or even to have its former meaning of "effective persuasion"—it is now understood to be merely manipulative lies. In fact, the content of the "arts" has been plundered of so many once-understood attributes that no one is quite sure of its content anymore. A hierarchy of credentialed art professionals makes its seasonal decisions, and the rest of us remove our hats.

Restoring meaning to the mutilated term *art* is ultimately what the Derriere Guard Festival was about. Precisely what meanings must be restored wasn't wholly resolved during its four days in Chelsea, but there's a good reason for that. The Derriere Guard's umbrella has been opened over a very disparate gathering of artists. As a group, they currently define themselves primarily in terms of their cultural enemies: Those critics, curators, museum administrators, and others who deny that their embrace of technique has any legitimacy. Definition-by-enemy is an inherently unstable position on the artists' part. You can make only martyrdom out of being denied, not meaning.

But as Selling Out participants discussed the interrelated roles of artist, patron, and audience, the Derriere Guard took on a more distinct aesthetic viewpoint. "What does it mean," asked Selden, moderator and rhetor, "when art becomes, as it has in the last several centuries, a commodity that has to be sold on the market?"

The common answer to this formulation is that when art is a commodity, the artist is a whore; that nothing can be both art and commodity because, as commodity, art is leeched of its transcendent qualities.

But several of the Guardists on the panel replied in quite a different voice. When art is part of a market process, they said, it means that someone wants it. Stefania de Kenessey, composer, defender of melodic value, and founder of the Derriere Guard, put it this way: "These ideological discussions about the marketplace make it seem something other than what it is...which is simply a constant process of communication, give and take, with one's potential audience."

Dana Gioia, the poet of "Money," was also on this panel, and went further, arguing that the market process could, despite itself, yield material that was realized after the fact to be art. Go anywhere, he said—Finland, Korea, Kenya, Arme-

nia—and ask, What are the major cultural contributions America has made? "They would give you a list," Gioia said, and no matter what else was on it, "the top two would be movies and jazz. Jazz, which really began in dance clubs and bordellos, brokered by the most dishonest recording agents possible, sold by companies for the lowest of motives, exploited by the managers, leaders exploiting their own sidemen. Somehow, out of this chaos of the marketplace grew something." Nor, added Gioia, is anyone under the illusion that Hollywood has ever been interested in much beyond money. "Somehow that market—and the kind of dynamic relationship it created with a real audience—created art."

Frederick Turner, scholar, poet, critic, has made a career of restoring meaning. He too was on this panel, and his perspective on the marketplace was unambiguously celebratory. There is no natural tension between art and the market, he argued, because if the former is spiritual, the latter is moral. "The deep vocabulary of the market," he offered, "is the vocabulary of the morality of human interaction." He had an array of examples. "The words of the market are: trust, grace, redemption, good, bond, interest, honor, obligation; all of those words refer to some of our basic moral activities as social beings." The restoration of art's social role, he suggested, would hinge on the understanding of the meaning of exchange itself, no matter the market. "Are there ways of reshaping, reconceiving the market in such a way that the hidden metaphorical meaning could come out again?" he asked.

Readers may recognize some of Turner's argument; he offered a version of it in REASON in "The Merchant of Avon" (March), in which he viewed the market through Shakespeare's works. Nor was Turner the only panel member with a libertarian cultural perspective. Dana Gioia, for example, did time as literary editor of *Inquiry*, the Cato Institute's magazine of the '70s and early '80s. There were times, in other words, when the Derriere Guard sounded rather like the voice of classical liberalism mounting a challenge to the modernist aesthetic establishment.

Only one anti-market seat was filled. Donald Kuspit, a professor of art history and philosophy, was present to sing the familiar song of money as the corruptor. Kuspit is to be complimented for taking the part when he was so outnumbered, because in the end his role was less to attempt to overwhelm his antagonists—this was after all their show—than it was to force them to sharpen their own presentations.

This he did by arguing that "buying art is a form of laundering money" and "a way of cleaning up filthy lucre." Kuspit offered a theory of "the ecstatically consumed art object of capitalist desire," which addressed the apparent paradox of high art's spirituality as opposed to its staggering potential market value. Kuspit illustrated the theory with the case of the Japanese insurance man who paid $58 million for a Van Gogh, and who was "so enamored of it that he wanted it burned when he died, and the ashes mixed with his ashes." This sort of thing was not so much a problem of anybody selling out, he suggested, as of those who want to buy in.

Kuspit became excited only over cultural subsidies, which he approved of when they derived from taxes (the art they generate is a welcome alternative to that distributed through the for-profit media, he said), but of which he was suspicious when they came from corporate profits. The line of thought was useful, however, because it led the Guardists on the panel to explore what art becomes in the absence of exchange: a "phantom" culture lacking an interested audience.

Gioia has addressed this, in terms of subsidized poetry, in a much-debated 1992 article in *The Atlantic Monthly*, "Can Poetry Matter?" Moderator Selden quoted from it: "Like subsidized farming that grows food no one wants, a poetry industry has been created to serve the interests of the producers and not the consumers. And in the process the integrity of the art has been betrayed." Asked to expand, Gioia said, "You see people publishing magazines that no one reads. Books that no one reads. People get a copy of a magazine in which they published a poem, they read their own poem, but no one else's." Gioia dubbed this phenomenon "a phantom literature," and added that "you could read any of the modern high arts into the template I set for poetry."

Kuspit, for his part, wondered "if poetry simply hasn't become another specialized activity, like all other activities in our society?" adding that "maybe only specialists understand specialists in some sense." Gioia's deadpan response was that that had been *his* point. Subsidized culture, freed of audience interaction, becomes insular.

Anyway, composer de Kenessey argued, the growth of cultural subsidies did not reflect social complexity or specialization; it was, rather, medieval in its exercise of the power of taste. "In the Middle Ages," she said, "the composer had only to please the bishop who was commissioning the work...and the situation, ironically, is quite medieval at the end of the 20th century, precisely because classical music operates much in the same realm. In fact, the decision over whether to recommission a composer will not be dependent on audience response, because [the music] is unlikely to make it into the marketplace....The so-called high arts are very much tailored to, and governed by, the small professional elite."

None of the Guardists was suggesting that subsidized work was necessarily bad, or even that subsidies are inherently wrong. Nor were they saying that whatever a mass audience approves is good. They argued only that those cultures that become dependent on elite aesthetic judgment lose a vital relationship with their audience, and threaten to become moribund. This would seem to be a controversial view only within the cultural establishment itself, which regards it as bizarre. But then that establishment doesn't know where its money has been, and doesn't want to put it where its mouth is. Because it talks.

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MFNemies

Beijing's atrocities put free-traders on the defensive.

By Rick Henderson

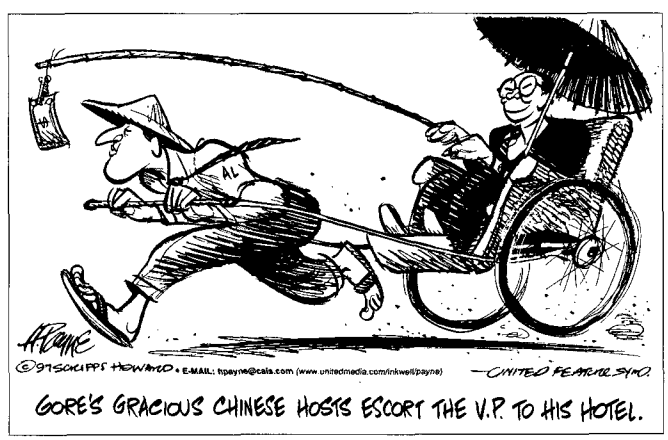
By June 3, the Clinton administration will have formally asked Congress to make China's "most favored nation" trading status permanent, or at least extend it for another year. The White House's timing could hardly be worse: Hong Kong goes under Beijing's control July 1. Allegations have arisen that the Chinese government funneled contributions to the 1996 Clinton-Gore campaign just as the administration refused to enforce sanctions against Beijing for its human rights offenses and its violations of the nuclear nonproliferation treaty. And during a visit to China in March, cameras captured Vice President Gore toasting Premier Li Peng, a man Gore called one of the "butchers of Beijing" during the 1992 campaign. Don't expect investigators to find a smoking gun—as *National Review* quipped, no memo saying, "Got the hundred thou. Go soft on human rights. [Signed] BC" will emerge—but the prospects of easily or quietly renewing China's MFN status have vanished.

Although China has had uninterrupted MFN status since 1980—before, during, and after the Tiananmen Square crackdown—the debate over China's trading relations with the United States comes up every year. As a consequence of a trade bill passed in 1974, the Jackson-Vanik Amendment, no communist regime that maintains tight restrictions on emigration can receive MFN status unless the president requests a waiver every year. Congress can vote down the president's request, but he can veto Congress's vote.

In an attempt to deny MFN extension to China this summer, a coalition of protectionists, human rights advocates, religious conservatives, and administration bashers have united to elevate MFN renewal to the top of the summer's political agenda. Indeed, *The Weekly Standard* used 18 pages of a recent issue to spell out why it considers China the new "Evil Empire." Trade with China also resonates with a larger audience: In an April poll the *Standard* commissioned on MFN renewal, 61 percent of the respondents opposed renewing MFN; only 29 percent favored it.

But economic historians and other trade analysts say that revoking MFN will not make Chinese leaders end their atrocities. The anti-MFN agenda, they say, is both unfocused and too ambitious. And they warn that across-the-board trade sanctions—the practical effect of removing MFN status—would likely lead Beijing to further isolate itself, leaving the communist rulers free to be even more ruthless against their internal foes.

There is no question that the Chinese communists control one of the most brutal regimes in the post–Cold War era. The government is holding as many as 8 million persons—tens of thousands of them presumed to be political or religious dissidents—in forced-labor camps. It continues to persecute Buddhists, Roman Catholics, Muslims, and other religious practitioners. Yet with the doublespeak particularly common in dictatorial regimes, officials say the existence of the government-sanctioned Patriotic Church demonstrates that China practices religious tolerance. Beijing has also announced its intent to suspend more than two dozen civil liberties in the Hong Kong charter when it takes control of that island. And it has all but crushed the pro-democracy movement that demonstrated in Tiananmen Square eight years ago.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GORE'S GRACIOUS CHINESE HOSTS ESCORT THE V.P. TO HIS HOTEL.

HENRY PAYNE

Beijing's policies are indefensible. And it has no intention of reforming to please the outside world. Indeed, the government seems to revel in infuriating its foreign critics. In April, for instance, Martin Lee, head of the Hong Kong Democratic Party, got assurances from President Clinton that the United States would keep an eye on Beijing's actions after the island's transfer. Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesman Shen Guofang immediately said Lee was "acting against the interests of the Chinese people," and that what happens to Hong Kong is China's "internal affair."

The anti-MFN coalition started forming in 1994, as the administration left unclear whether it would link favorable trading relations with progress in China's human rights policies. More than two dozen prominent Chinese dissidents now living in the United States wrote to Clinton and proposed repealing MFN status on those products made by the People's Liberation Army and other state-owned enterprises, including items manufactured by prisoners. Among the writers were University of Arizona physicist Fang Lizhi, who was a university vice president at the time of the student demonstrations in 1989; former *People's Daily* writer Liu Binyan; and Harry Wu, who spent 19 years in Chinese labor camps and has secretly returned on several occasions to document atrocities inside the camps. Money is fungible, of course, and central planners in Beijing could probably obfuscate the flows of cash and goods inside China's borders, but this targeted ap-

proach offered a novel way to engage the communist regime.

At that time, only a couple dozen members of the House joined the effort, including Reps. Nancy Pelosi (D-Calif.) and Frank Wolf (R-Va.), both active defenders of free trade and human rights. But the most public proponents were such noted protectionists as Minority Leader Dick Gephardt (D-Mo.), Minority Whip David Bonior (D-Mich.), and Marcy Kaptur (D-Ohio), Congress's noisiest opponent of the North American Free Trade Agreement. That made it appear that the deeper issue was the balance of trade with China. Before proponents of the targeted-MFN approach could line up allies, Clinton announced that the U.S. government would not link trade and human rights.

The impending transfer of Hong Kong, the death of Deng Xiaoping, China's human rights atrocities, and Clinton campaign scandals have emboldened social conservatives Gary Bauer and James Dobson to organize this year's coalition, asking representatives of AFL-CIO member unions to oppose MFN extension without exceptions. They have joined with the legislators who favored targeting MFN to specific products three years ago, because those lawmakers see that approach going nowhere and "feel they were burned," says Jeff Bell, a Republican strategist who's acting as a liaison between Bauer and the old targeted-MFN group. "No one will rule out something intermediate right now, but most of the coalition is focused on total revocation" of MFN status.

Yet renewing MFN, making it permanent, and even developing ways to expand trade with China are crucial to the prospects for the liberation of those living on the mainland. It's important to realize that giving a country "most favored nation" status has nothing to do with the U.S. government's (or American citizens') opinion of another regime. Ironically enough, the designation is a relic of the 1890s, when countries were vying to establish commercial relations with the Chinese. England, Russia, and France tried to set up exclusive trading privileges with different Chinese regions. The United States instead established its "open door" policy, which treated all nations to equally favorable trading terms. Any country with MFN status receives the same trading privileges as the "most favored nation." As a consequence, only a half-dozen countries—Cuba, North Korea, Vietnam, Azerbaijan, Afghanistan, and Laos—don't have MFN status. Even Cambodia regained its MFN designation last year.

It's also important to focus on two questions lurking behind all the polling data and alliances: What, specifically, do opponents of MFN hope to accomplish? And would revoking China's trading status achieve those goals?

To satisfy critics of MFN extension, here's what China needs to do: Close the labor camps. End religious persecution. Stop harassing entrepreneurs. Allow open criticism of the regime. Cease the military buildup. In other words, relinquish power and institute a constitutional democracy.

To put it mildly, that's not going to happen any time soon. Kimberly Elliott, a senior fellow at the Institute for International Economics in Washington, D.C., can't envision MFN revocation accomplishing any of those goals. Along with IIE colleague Gary Hufbauer (a trade official in the Ford and Carter administrations) and others, Elliott recently updated a survey of 130 uses of trade sanctions dating back to World War I. Generally speaking, trade sanctions have achieved their objectives about one-third of the time. But that figure is a bit misleading, says Elliott, because "sanctions typically don't work against large economies. They work best when they have modest goals" (such as the release of a political prisoner) and don't threaten the power base of the government they are targeted against. The anti-MFN agenda, she notes, fails on both counts.

Take the three-decade-old U.S. trade embargo with Cuba. By any standard, Cuba's economy is on the verge of collapse. Yet the U.S. State Department's *Cuba Country Report on Human Rights Practices for 1996* says the Castro regime's "human rights record worsened in 1996....The Government continued to restrict sharply basic political and civil rights, including: The right of citizens to change their government; the freedoms of speech, press, assembly, association, religion, and movement; the right to privacy; and various workers' rights." The embargo has not toppled Fidel Castro; indeed, it seems to have strengthened his hand by giving the

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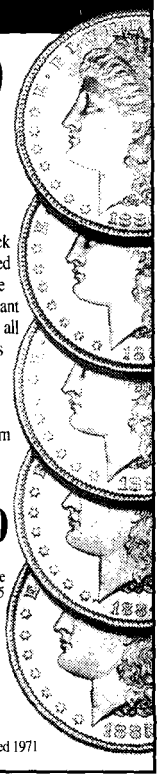


"maximum leader" an intractable foreign enemy to blame for Cuba's woes.

Even when sanctions work, notes the IIE survey, there's usually much more at play than trade. Elliott and her colleagues consider sanctions imposed against Iraq in 1990 a success, but that's only because the U.S.-led military alliance annihilated the Iraqi army. Sanctions against South Africa helped end the apartheid regime, but they were far from the only factor: Democratic institutions (albeit tightly circumscribed) existed in South Africa, along with a modern industrial economy, a stable middle class, and a vocal anti-apartheid movement among the ruling citizens. None of these elements exist in China.

Conservative strategist Bell, a longtime opponent of protectionism, says he favors revoking MFN because current policies have not made the Beijing regime more democratic. "What has gone well in China since Bill Clinton delinked trade and human rights in '94?" he asks. "As their markets appear to open up, human rights abuses continue to grow." Bell contrasts Clinton's silence about Beijing's policies with the tough talk Ronald Reagan used in the waning years of the Soviet Empire. "The biggest lie," he says, "is that nothing we do could have any effect [on China]. What we say has enormous power."

"What we think about China vs. what we should do about it are two separate issues," counters Joe Cobb, president of the Trade Policy Institute, a Washington think tank that advocates trade liberalization. "Removing MFN from China would be about as effective as Jimmy Carter's pulling out of the 1980 Olympics was in getting the Russians out of Afghanistan."

China in 1997, says Cobb, is not comparable to the Soviet empire 10 years ago. For one thing, the NATO alliance spent hundreds of billions of dollars a year trying to "contain" the Soviet Union. The United States also armed anti-communist insurgencies in Central America, Africa, and Asia, and continues to maintain military forces in South Korea. No such military buildup against China exists now or is intended.

Interestingly, critics of MFN fall back quite readily on anti-capitalist rhetoric. James Dorn, director of academic programs at the Cato Institute and an economics professor at Towson State University, bristles at the suggestion that maintaining trade is just about "sell[ing] a few more Big Macs," as Gary Bauer wrote in *The Weekly Standard*. "Trade itself is a human right," says Dorn, author of a forthcoming book on China and MFN. "By denying trade, you're contracting human rights rather than expanding them."

MFN opponents also tend to assume that the Beijing regime is a completely monolithic economic juggernaut with no organized internal opposition. Yet, notes Dorn, it is widely agreed that perhaps half of China's state-owned enterprises are bankrupt, and many of those in operation lose money. Dorn also cites a growing Chinese civil society, including such informal business and community organizations as the Association of Private Entrepreneurs, which claims some 22 million members.

The southern regions of the nation have a growing entrepreneurial sector, much of it fueled by investment and expertise from business owners who live in Hong Kong. Revoking MFN would crush this economic activity, the most likely source for an independent middle class on the mainland. An April report by the Hong Kong government estimates that denying MFN would reduce Hong Kong's trade by as much as 8 percent, reduce its growth in GDP (currently 5 percent a year) by as much as 60 percent, and cost the island 86,000 jobs.

Revoking MFN would crush the burgeoning entrepreneurial sector in southern China, the most likely source for the development of an independent middle class on the mainland.

Since more than one-third of China's trade is with the United States, says Elliott, revoking MFN, which would raise U.S. tariffs on Chinese goods by as much as tenfold, "would be disastrous. It would have no positive effect on China. If we withdraw MFN, we lose whatever leverage we still have with them." Dorn fears that isolating Beijing could "create a type of radical nationalism that decreases the costs to the Chinese leaders of becoming ideological," as in Cuba.

Last year, the House extended China's MFN status by a 2-to-1 margin, so any vote against MFN extension this summer, says Jeff Bell, "would be a major event." That could happen: Among House Republican leaders, Conference Vice Chairman Susan Molinari (N.Y.), Policy Committee Chairman Chris Cox (Calif.), and Budget Committee Chairman John Kasich (Ohio) oppose MFN renewal. Majority Leader Dick Armey (Tex.) is reconsidering his support for MFN. At the end of April, Speaker Newt Gingrich said he supports extending MFN for no more than six months to see how Beijing behaves during the transfer of Hong Kong.

Clinton has vowed that, even if the House votes down his MFN request, he will veto that resolution. Overriding that veto isn't likely in the House, let alone in the Senate, where it may not be possible to get as much as a simple majority to oppose MFN extension.

But even a symbolic vote from the House wouldn't advance the cause of freedom in China. Harry Wu, who spent 19 years in the Laogai—China's labor camps—is one of the most passionate opponents of MFN extension. He chronicled Beijing's persecution of religious practitioners in the April *Crisis*. And in an article for *Insight* this January, he talked about Wei Jingsheng, a dissident who has spent 14 years in the Laogai "because he spoke his mind and, most importantly, he spoke his mind to other people." Wei is famous. "But what happens to the nameless and the faceless?"

What indeed? Wu was fortunate, in a way. He came to this country in the mid-1980s after waiting more than five years to get a visa which let him work as a scholar at Stanford University. Tensions between the United States and China weren't as high back then, permitting the sort of scholarly and cultural exchanges that let Harry Wu come here. But if U.S. policy makers heed the advice Wu now offers, thousands of those "nameless and faceless" prisoners of conscience could languish in labor camps for decades to come.

Rick Henderson (rhender555@aol.com) is managing editor of REASON.

Money Walks

Why campaign contributions aren't as corrupting as you think

By Jeff Milyo

The recent fund raising excesses of President Clinton and House Speaker Gingrich have become unlikely stalking horses for public financing of congressional campaigns. Both Clinton and Gingrich were engaged in "party building" activities that had no direct link to any congressional campaigns. Despite this, reformers point to these scandals as evidence that we need to overhaul the entire system of campaign finance. In the words of Ann McBride, president of Common Cause, the goal is to "harness the winds of anger and turn it into a demand for positive action." The president of Public Citizen, Joan Claybrook, cites "the orgy of party spending" as evidence that "immediate efforts to clean up the system [are] absolutely necessary." The McCain-Feingold bill, currently languishing in the Senate, embodies the change campaign finance reformers crave.

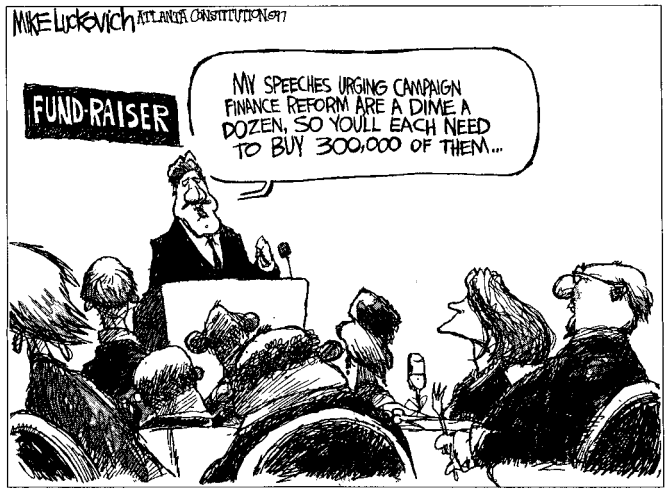
McCain-Feingold, also known as the Bipartisan Campaign Finance Reform Act, would outlaw almost all soft-money contributions to political parties—a restriction unlikely to survive judicial review. The Supreme Court has consistently held that contributions for "party building" activities are protected by the First Amendment.

The remainder of the bill—the part that could probably survive judicial scrutiny—places new limits on congressional campaigns. Political action committee contributions would be eliminated. And in case the Supreme Court strikes that provision, the bill lowers maximum allowable PAC contributions from $10,000 per candidate per election cycle to $2,000. McCain-Feingold would also force radio and televison broadcasters to provide free and reduced-rate air time to candidates who abide by spending caps and restrictions on out-of-state contributions.

The leadership of Common Cause, Public Citizen, and the newly formed Campaign for America have made clear that they view McCain-Feingold as an important first step toward their real goal: full public financing of elections. Even though reformers acknowledge that public financing does violence to free speech, they see it as a necessary, drastic measure to end what they feel is the unacceptably dominant role that money plays in politics.

Few conventional wisdoms are so widely and firmly held—and so little supported by evidence—as the chestnut that there exists a vibrant cash-and-carry market for both elected offices and legislative votes. The two fundamental tenets of this "flea market" view of money and politics are 1) special interests buy favors from politicians with campaign contributions, and 2) incumbent politicians then use this dirty money to buy re-election with massive campaign expenditures.

More often than not, the popular press treats these claims as self-evident. In place of rational argument, one is simply offered lists of contributor names and dollar amounts. Visit the Web sites of the Center for Responsive Politics (www.crp.org), Common Cause (www.commoncause.org), or Public Citizen (www.citizen.org), and you will be inundated with such "analysis." When the reformers do make arguments, they point to the ever-increasing amount of money spent on elections, the gaudy spending advantage enjoyed by congressional incumbents, the high re-election rates of incumbents, the dearth of able challengers, and the well-known correlation of contributor interests with the committee assignments and voting records of incumbents.


MIKE LUCKOVICH ATLANTA CONSTITUTION '97
FUND-RAISER
MY SPEECHES URGING CAMPAIGN FINANCE REFORM ARE A DIME A DOZEN, SO YOU'LL EACH NEED TO BUY 300,000 OF THEM...
MIKE LUCKOVICH

It is true that over the past 20 years, total campaign spending has increased faster than the rate of inflation. It is also true that during this time the turnover rate in Congress (defeats plus retirements divided by the number of seats) was quite low—less than 10 percent in 1984, 1988, and 1990. In fact, it is more common for incumbents to be unopposed than to be defeated. Further, even when incumbents are challenged, most races are one-sided. Incumbents take advantage of this lack of competition to build up large reserves of campaign cash for use in future elections.

Although those facts make campaign finance reformers hyperventilate, the inferences they draw from them aren't always accurate. For example, the increase in real campaign spending has *not* caused a decrease in turnover in the House and Senate. Since 1992, the turnover rate in the House has averaged about 20 percent—the highest average turnover rate in more than 40 years. Part of this increase is attributable to redistricting after 1990; retirements and defeats typically increase after redistricting, when some unlucky incumbents are suddenly faced with new and possibly even unfriendly constituents.

Yet current turnover rates are higher now than they were after each of the four previous decennial redistrictings. In fact, over the past 20 years, the turnover rates in both the House and Senate show a slight *positive*

correlation with the average spending advantage of incumbents over challengers. This is the opposite of what the conventional wisdom would predict.

Of course, it is still true that in any given election year, winning candidates spend more than losing candidates. Reformers infer from this that campaign expenditures cause electoral success, but social scientists have been unable to establish a strong causal connection. The fundamental difficulty in measuring the electoral effects of campaign spending is that contributors are more apt to give money to candidates with a greater probability of victory. In 1996, for instance, PACs contributed about $130 million to congressional incumbents and only $26 million to challengers. It is therefore not surprising that winners outspend losers.

Further, such candidate attributes as leadership, integrity, and perseverence are important determinants of both fund raising and electoral success, but are difficult to quantify. Studies that ignore these unobserved factors produce biased estimates that exaggerate the electoral effects of candidate spending. For example, you might observe that candidates who spend more money fare better in elections, but how much of this is actually caused by the money alone? Surely, part of this correlation is due to the fact that the winning candidate was intelligent, articulate, and hard-working. Since those qualities help both fund raising and vote getting, part of the observed correlation is spurious.

The most promising approach to deciphering how large a role money plays in electoral success is to examine changes in candidate vote share associated with changes in candidate spending. To the extent that the other factors that affect elections are constant over time, they will not affect changes in fund raising or vote getting. Only factors that change matter. For example, my research has indicated that House incumbents who transfer onto powerful committees or are promoted to leadership positions receive an extra $50,000 in campaign contributions, all else constant. This windfall translates into higher campaign spending but does not lead to any significant increase in vote share. I have examined several other "spending shocks" for House incumbents, but they also produce no statistically significant increases in vote share. This suggests that at least for incumbents, marginal spending is unimportant. Challengers, of course, might be a different case.

The 2nd Congressional District in Utah provides a unique case study on the effects of challenger spending. In 1992, Democrat Karen Shepard beat Republican Enid Greene in a race for an open seat.

In a 1994 rematch, however, Enid Waldholtz (Greene had gotten married in the interim) defeated the incumbent Shepard. Soon after the election, it was discovered that the Waldholtz campaign had spent almost $2 million in stolen funds. (Because of the resulting scandal, Waldholtz declined to stand for re-election in 1996.) This provides an ideal experiment, since the infusion of illegal cash was not caused by Waldholtz's political acumen, but rather by the activities of her then-campaign manager and husband (and now convict), Joe Waldholtz.

Only 5 percent of voters make political contributions of any kind. And the total amount spent on campaigns per election cycle is less than consumers spend over a similar period on chewing gum. If legislation is for sale, it's not likely that the power to coerce millions would be priced so low.

In 1992, Waldholtz received only 36 percent of the vote. In 1994 she won with 56 percent. If we attribute all of the 20-percentage-point increase in Waldholtz's vote to this ill-gotten windfall, then it seems that an extra $100,000 in spending yields 1 percent of the vote. However, other factors also contributed to the Waldholtz victory. First, Shepard's surprisingly liberal voting record alienated many voters (she even needed a police escort at one district meeting). Second, 1994 was a good year for Republicans in general: The average electoral swing to Republicans challenging Democratic freshman was six percentage points.

This leaves an unexplained increase in Waldholtz's vote percentage of at most 14 points. In the 1992 race, a conservative third party candidate, Merrill Cook, polled 18 percent of the vote, but no major independent candidates ran in 1994 (Cook won the seat in 1996, running as a Republican). If only half of Cook's voters in 1992 went for Waldholtz in 1994 (a very conservative estimate), then the unexplained swing to Waldholtz shrinks to just five percentage points. If all of this swing in vote share is attributed to the illegal influx of campaign spending, then it seems that an extra $100,000 of campaign spending buys at most 0.25 percent of the vote.

That case study is provocative, and also in line with other research. Steven Levitt, an economist at Harvard University, has examined all repeat meetings of House candidates (such as Waldholtz-Shepard) from 1978 to 1990. Levitt has found that an extra $100,000 in candidate spending (whether spent by an incumbent or challenger) leads to an increase in the candidate's vote share of about 0.2 percentage points. I have replicated Levitt's analysis using more recent data and have found similar results.

These recent studies cast serious doubt on the notion that elections can be bought. If we take Levitt's estimate of 0.2 percentage points per $100,000, then to buy just 10 percent of the vote in a typical House district, you would need to spend $5 million. Newt Gingrich spent a little more than that in 1996 and won by 15 percentage points (but his opponent spent over $3 million). Only four other House candidates spent as much as $2 million in 1996, while the average House incumbent spent only about $650,000. This suggests that only very close elections can be bought. But few elections are that close. For example, if every challenger had been given an extra $100,000 to spend in 1996, then Levitt's model predicts that two additional House incumbents would have been defeated. Extending this to the previous five House elections, only nine more races would have turned out differently.

In a 1996 study, Ohio State University political scientist Tim Groseclose and I found still more evidence that campaign spending is not all that the conventional wisdom supposes. Like many other researchers before us, we discovered that

stockpiles of unspent contributions, or incumbent war chests, had no deterrent effect on challengers in House races. What was novel about our study was that we also considered the possible deterrent effect of an incumbent's personal wealth. Many reformers have called for a ban on both war chests and self-financing, since neither of these funding sources is limited by current law.

The conventional wisdom holds that potential challengers shy away from taking on well-heeled incumbents, which confers an unfair advantage to the wealthy. But we found no evidence that an incumbent's personal wealth affects either the presence or quality of challengers. By itself, this lack of deterrence is puzzling. Yet these findings are quite consistent with the studies of campaign spending already discussed. Challengers are not deterred by incumbent war chests or personal fortunes because money simply isn't that important in congressional races.

But if challengers aren't deterred by war chests and personal wealth, why are there so few good challengers in congressional races? The obvious answer is that even good challengers would lose. Even when congressional approval ratings were at an all-time low, most survey respondents indicated that they would vote to reelect their own representatives and senators. It isn't hard to understand why most incumbents are so safe from competition.

Indeed, it's a little like the reason men do not ask Maria Shriver out on dates: It isn't because Arnold Schwarzenegger can outspend them; it's just that he was chosen through a competitive process and for now he's doing a satisfactory job. And though Arnold may have some incumbent advantage, the main reason for his success is that Maria really likes him. Similarly, congressional turnover rates are low because politicians are such able and attentive suitors to their constituents.

Even though campaign spending isn't the key to re-election, that doesn't mean candidates don't work very hard to raise funds. Just because campaign ads don't have much of an effect doesn't mean that anything else candidates do is more effective. But it is ridiculous for reformers to claim that dollars, not votes, elect legislators. I don't vote for a candidate just because he spends the most money, nor do you. It's insulting to think so little of our fellow citizens that we believe elective offices go to the highest bidder.

If campaign spending really doesn't alter the electoral prospects of a candidate, why do so many citizens, clubs, unions, and corporations make contributions? The quick answer: They don't. Only 5 percent of voters make political contributions of any kind. Further, the total amount spent on political campaigns per election cycle is less than consumers spend over a similar period on chewing gum, greeting cards, or yogurt. If legislation is for sale, it seems unlikely that the power to coerce millions would be priced so low. Even the PACs are pikers; PAC contributions are typically in the range of $500 to $2,500, well below the legal maximum of $10,000 per candidate for each election cycle.

Further, PAC contributions accounted for only 34 percent of total congressional campaign receipts in 1988 and 1990; the share fell to less than 30 percent for 1992 through 1996. Perhaps the decline is linked to the realization that, despite several studies, there is no systematic evidence that legislators cast their votes in response to campaign contributions. PAC contributions mostly function not as bribes but as donations to like-minded legislators. If PAC contributions were meant as bribes, they wouldn't be very effective ones. Given the limited effectiveness of campaign spending, a $500 PAC contribution probably won't elicit much gratitude from a member of Congress.

Contrary to the conventional wisdom, congressional campaign finance is not out of control. Money is nowhere near the dominant force that reformers claim. Once we realize this, proposals to limit freedom of speech in the name of cleaning up elections, such as the McCain-Feingold bill, become less appealing. Private campaign finance does not have nearly as severe a corrupting effect on elections as many claim. Though the reformer lobby should greet this revelation as good news, somehow I doubt it will.

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Mugging Libertarians

The Weekly Standard's case against laissez faire

By Walter Olson

Brace yourself: The root cause of everything from street muggings and gang delinquency to rudeness at traffic lights to excessive lawsuit filing has finally been found, and it's...libertarianism. At least that's the view of Andrew Peyton Thomas, an attorney with the state of Arizona and a frequent contributor to conservative magazines. Writing in the August 26, 1996, *Weekly Standard*, Mr. Thomas referred to the above woes as "the libertarian-created problems of Southern California and elsewhere." Readers who hadn't known that libertarians got to run things in Los Angeles may rub their eyes, but Mr. Thomas isn't kidding one bit. He blames crime, rudeness, and litigiousness on the "live-and-let-live urban lifestyle" as spawned by "the moral *laissez-faire* disorder of libertarianism."

Mr. Thomas, author of *Crime and the Roots of Order*, has made a momentous discovery: "The root of our crime problem," as he informed *Standard* readers on March 17 of this year, "is a rights-happy radical individualism." That must be it: When kids join identically dressing gangs to which they pledge blood loyalty and discipline, it's because they've fallen for radical individualism. When they steal cars and mug passersby, it's because they've acquired an undue reverence for individual rights. And when they conduct drive-by shootings, it's because they pursue a "live-and-let-live urban lifestyle." Hence the notorious turf fights between the Friedman Brotherhood with their tattoos of "Born to Choose" and the Hayek Kings with their boom boxes blaring "Noncoercive As U Wanna Be."

More of Mr. Thomas's views in a moment. The wider theme to be illustrated here is the mounting pace at which sectors of the traditionalist right are showing signs of itching to ditch their old libertarian allies. More than a few trad writers are starting to talk themselves into piling virtually everything they dislike about the modern world onto terms like *libertarian* and *individual rights*, blaming social ills of all sorts on the West's supposed excess of freedom, choice, and autonomy.

A further puzzlement is the particular role of *The Weekly Standard*. When it was founded nearly two years ago, the *Standard* was expected to be a different animal entirely from, say, *Chronicles* or *First Things*. Many of its writers—David Frum, Christopher Caldwell, and Andrew Ferguson, to say nothing of P.J. O'Rourke—enjoyed a reputation as highly sympathetic to libertarian themes. David Brooks's 1995 introduction to the anthology *Backward and Upward* made an appealing case for a "new" conservative writing that would aim to be "low on puritanism," "urbane, self-assured (rather than defensive), cosmopolitan, and diverse." Moreover, the *Standard* soon forged as one of its leading themes the goal of preserving and expanding the coalition of the Reagan years—and it would hardly seem prudent to begin by tossing out one of that coalition's leading components.

The *Standard*'s emerging rap is, I fear, that libertarianism is not just a political philosophy but a character defect, if not an outright revolt against the divine order. Gertrude Himmelfarb marshals the case for the prosecution, writing summarily that "the ideology of absolute individual rights and freedom of choice" is "self-absorbed and self-indulgent."

But by this winter, when the magazine ran back-to-back attacks on the ideas contained in Charles Murray's *What It Means to Be a Libertarian* and David Boaz's *Libertarianism: A Primer*, it was clear that all bets were off. The review of *What It Means* was condescending (and one condescends to a writer like Charles Murray at one's peril) and full of passages dismissing libertarian thought as the stuff of college late-night bull sessions, "fringe elements and half-baked ideas," with a passing swipe at REASON as soft on polygamy.

"Absolute liberty corrupts absolutely," proclaimed *Public Interest* Executive Editor Adam Wolfson in his review of Boaz, no doubt thinking that an improvement over the original Acton. The libertarian tenet of self-ownership, he wrote, "appears to mean that the self is its own creator, sovereign over itself, without obligations or duties beyond self-satisfaction." Sandwich a redundancy between two absurdities, and you can turn David Boaz into Max Stirner. Since when is autonomy to be reserved for the entities (if any) that are self-created and free of moral obligation?

Editorials have kept up the friction. It's common enough for conservative publications to favor keeping drugs illegal, but the March 31 *Standard* goes a crucial step further, complaining that the opposing view is allowed into polite society at all, a problem it blames on an "oddly newish upper-middle-class libertarianism....It is now respectable for people to argue that cancer and glaucoma patients should have access to 'medical' marijuana cigarettes, though no one has yet proved that smoking pot is ever necessary or good for you....Government should not, in principle, play facilitator to any life-denying impulse." (I called Richard Brookhiser, the *National Review* senior editor who

emerged as a leading advocate of medical marijuana after his recent bout with cancer, for a reaction. "I think it's a life-denying impulse to prevent people with terrible symptoms and conditions from getting access to what will relieve them," he says. "It's also an evidence-denying impulse—we're talking about studies that go back a long way, as well as the testimony of people who've used it.")

My friend Charlie used to mutter "Communist!" when a driver would cut him off in traffic, and some *Standard* writers now employ the epithet *libertarian* in contexts that seem barely related to how anyone feels about the initiation of force. Waxing Chestertonian in a review of the novels of Philip K. Dick, *Standard* Contributing Editor J. Bottum and John Wilson deplore a "grandiose and antinomian libertarian vision of humankind" in which "everything small and human and domestic is stripped away." Well, maybe.

But then in slamming *Beyond Queer*, the recent anthology of non-leftist, non-adversarial-culture gay writing, Mr. Bottum charges that what the authors "typically understand as conservatism is a kind of sexualized libertarianism, with Barry Goldwater, Ross Perot, and Harvey Milk raised up as the true conservative heroes." Anyone who can figure out what's meant here by "sexualized libertarianism" can win extra points by showing how such a thing would lead to the lionization of the late Milk, a standard-issue leftist politico—or, even more incredibly, of Perot.

Unlike some of his colleagues, Andrew Peyton Thomas appears familiar enough with what libertarians actually believe. In blaming us for crime, for example, he's not getting us mixed up with the excesses of some turn-'em-loose "civil libertarians." He explains that what he's criticizing "is the philosophy of the Information Age....Libertarianism teaches that government and the community it represents should be highly limited in size and function, so that they do not infringe upon individual liberty and economic decision-making. In political circles, libertarianism can be recognized as the yuppie philosophy of fiscally conservative and socially liberal." Close enough to what a press agent for the Cato Institute might say, except for the slight difference that Thomas appears to loathe the group he's describing.

The titles from recent *Standard* articles tell the story: "Up from Libertarianism"; "The Libertarian Temptation" (criticizing Virginia Postrel's April REASON editorial "Laissez Fear"); "My Son the Libertarian" (he was kinda bratty today). For a believer in individual rights, there's the same kind of thrill in perusing today's *Standard* that a Shriner might feel in stumbling onto anti-Masonic literature. Who else would pay us so much attention, or find us so important? But it's a chill wind for those who might want to preserve the conservative coalition that's been so successful these last couple of decades.

And it may be getting chillier before long. In the February *Commentary* symposium on the future of conservatism, *Standard* Editor William Kristol writes that the "task of conservatism today" is, first, to restore transcendent as opposed to secularly based standards to discussions of the role of government, and, second, to "take on the sacred cow of contemporary liberalism—choice." He's explicitly talking not just about the abortion issue but about the role of government in general.

The *Standard*'s emerging rap is, I fear, that libertarianism is not just a political philosophy but a character defect, if not an outright revolt against the divine order. Gertrude Himmelfarb marshals the case for the prosecution, writing summarily that "the ideology of absolute individual rights and freedom of choice" is "self-absorbed and self-indulgent."

OK, I'll admit it: I've known more than a few libertarians who were self-absorbed and self-indulgent, sometimes painfully so. And more than a few traditional conservatives as well: Having a high, even excessive regard for one's own views, interests, factions, and associates is a rather common trait in this world. What libertarians have going for them, I'd say, is this: No one else has developed a political philosophy that accords such a central role to the rights of others. ◆

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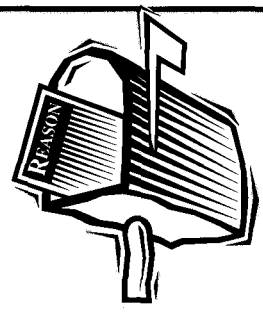

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Lipstick Traces

By Cathy Young

The Lipstick Proviso: Women, Sex & Power in the Real World, by Karen Lehrman, New York: Anchor/Doubleday, 228 pages, $23.95

If we step back and consider that 100 years ago American women could not vote, and that a mere 50 years ago many companies did not hire married women as a matter of policy, the changes in women's status in the last half of this century seem nothing short of amazing. Yet what used to be called "the Woman Question" is still with us. With external barriers to advancement largely gone, many women find themselves held back by conflicts between career and family—while the women's movement continues to see patriarchal oppression everywhere and is preoccupied with such perils as dirty jokes at the office.

In recent years, there has been a spate of books attempting to reclaim feminism from the ideologues and the crazies. Karen Lehrman's *The Lipstick Proviso* is the latest addition to the body of dissident feminist literature. A former *New Republic* editor, Lehrman espouses a classical "liberal feminism." She is angered by the "victim-based theories" and the "group-think mentality" that have replaced the old mandates of femininity with an equally or more rigid "set of opinions, values, behaviors, even clothes." She is appalled by feminist theories that scorn rationality and independence as "male values," and she is impatient with the notion of women or feminists as "a homogeneous sisterhood."

Feminism, Lehrman says, is simply about equal rights and equal opportunities: "How women exercise those rights and what they decide to do with their opportunities—these are matters of personal choice." Above all, feminism must treat each woman as a unique individual: She may be a corporate raider or a full-time mother, may "wear slinky dresses and heels or baggy overalls and combat boots." The "lipstick proviso" Lehrman would append to the feminist contract says, "Women don't have to sacrifice their individuality, or even their femininity—whatever it means to each of them—to be equal."

In the public sphere, "liberal feminism" requires gender-neutral treatment—with no special protections and no preferences: "Feminism, like (classical) liberalism, requires equality of opportunity, not equality of result." Lehrman provides a good overview of research showing that much of the gender disparity in pay and job status results from individual decisions such as starting families and choosing jobs more compatible with child rearing. She notes that men's and women's career choices have converged greatly and will probably continue to converge, but may never be the same. "[I]f women choose not to go into every profession, be it auto repair or brain surgery, in the same numbers as men, this represents no affront to feminism."

Feminism, Karen Lehrman says, is simply about equal rights and equal opportunities: "How women exercise those rights and what they decide to do with their opportunities—these are matters of personal choice."

An emphasis on individuality and equality does not, Lehrman argues, imply wholesale denial of innate sex differences. Women, she writes, "have made enough progress to be able to discuss the fact that some emotional and behavioral differences between the sexes may have biological roots." She is particularly interested in evolutionary psychology, which examines ways in which our behavior is (supposedly) affected by the strategies our ancestors pursued to enhance their genetic survival—a theory which, Lehrman stresses, does not necessarily confirm traditional stereotypes; new research suggests that competitiveness and ambition are "natural" female traits.

As Lehrman points out, the knee-jerk dismissal of biology has obvious dangers: If, as is now generally agreed, women's greater susceptibility to depression is partly genetic, ignoring this does no one any good. Other issues are perhaps more controversial. If women are biologically predisposed to be better at caring for the young, will child rearing remain woman's work? Lehrman says that "the average mother...will probably be more sensitive, nurturing, and responsive to a child's needs than the average father" but adds that in many cases the father can be an equally good or even better parent. As important, she makes the often overlooked point that just because some behaviors may be biological doesn't always mean that they're good or that they can't be modified.

Just as equality and individuality are not incompatible with sexual difference, they are not incompatible with sexual dynamics. Lehrman is sharply critical of the dogma that the workplace must be unsexed. "Sexual tension is as much a part of any office environment as professional jealousy," she writes, while stopping sensibly short of the notion, which a few mavericks have taken to promoting, that women should use sexuality as a career asset. Refreshingly, she also observes that a rejection of anti-sex feminism does not require or justify flaunting one's sex life and kinky fantasies: "Real strength—even real sexual strength—doesn't need to be constantly exhibited and reinforced."

Lehrman has insightful things to say on many other topics, from the hypocrisy of women (including Hillary Rodham Clinton) who use the specter of "backlash" to deflect charges of unethical conduct to the

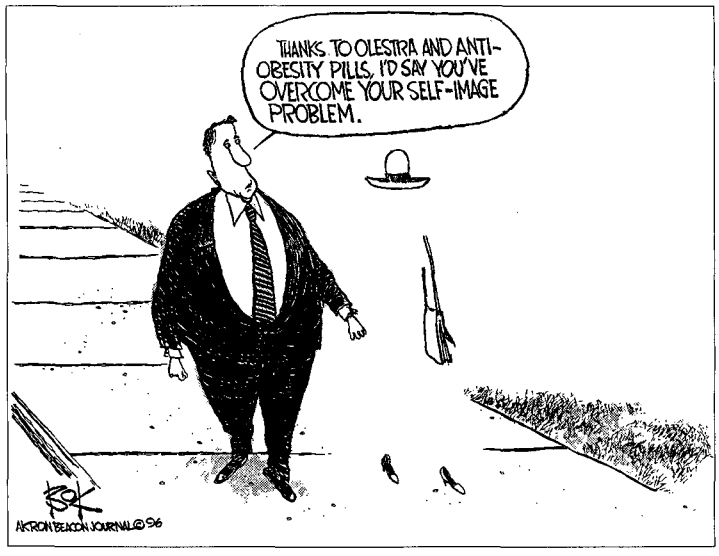
absurdity of arguing that it's unfeminist to want to be thin while ignoring the serious health risks of being fat.

Lehrman's spirited celebration of autonomy, beauty, and true diversity makes *The Lipstick Proviso* inspiring. Her individuality-with-difference approach to sexual distinctions is basically sound (even if, having reviewed some of the research, I think she tends to overstate the differences). She has a knack for the pithy phrase that sums up a key point: "[J]ust as ambition doesn't make you any less of a woman, grace and sensuality don't make you any less of a feminist." Or, "Under liberal feminism, the fact that a woman is female may not be the most interesting or important thing about her."

That said, I have some major caveats. While stating that American women are not "oppressed," Lehrman makes too many concessions to the sexism-is-alive party line—from such vague comments as "much of society continues...to punish women who breach gender lines" (how, precisely?) to an uncritical restatement of the cliché that girls get less encouragement than boys to speak in class (with a rather lame dismissal of the significant challenges to this claim).

More fundamental is *The Lipstick Proviso*'s man problem. As Lehrman acknowledges, her primary focus is on women—which is not necessarily wrong but results in a blinkered view. Thus, for instance, she suggests that partly due to traditional socialization, women are "more vulnerable to self-destructive behaviors" ranging from extreme dieting to helplessness, forgetting that men are more prone to far deadlier self-destructive behaviors such as neglecting one's health, reckless driving, alcoholism, and suicide. She asserts that the government has no right to bar women from combat but says nothing about male-only draft registration.

If feminism's core value is freedom of choice, what about men's choices? I agree that "equality...doesn't require that men stay home with kids in equal numbers to women" and that women will probably always choose to do so more often than men. Yet in some of the surveys Lehrman cites to show that most women would prefer to work less and spend more time with their families, many men also express this desire. Today, though, this option is far more available to women, as is the opportunity to trade a lucrative job for a more-interesting one. It is still far more expected of a man to be a primary breadwinner in a family.



Lehrman often talks about the need for women to force men to "evolve" not through government action but individually, in their relationships. Women, she says, should demand more equality, more emotional support, more sharing of housework and child care. But as long as we want to change traditional arrangements, shouldn't women, too, modify their inegalitarian expectations and give up their claim to a more-special bond to the children and place less priority on a man's provider potential? Lehrman suggests that this probably won't change because of women's evolutionary heritage and leaves it at that—even though she has no trouble arguing that other traits that she believes may have genetic roots, such as male inexpressiveness or female emotional dependency, need to change.

Such one-sidedness pervades Lehrman's discussion of the "personal work" women need to do: "[T]he primary problem for most American women today isn't how 'society' deals with women, it's how individual men do—and how women let them get away with it." (Is that really a problem for *most* women?) Unlike orthodox feminists, Lehrman stresses women's responsibility for staying with men who mistreat them; but it doesn't occur to her that in the personal realm, men may have just as many complaints.

This brings me to the most puzzling aspect of *The Lipstick Proviso*—one that, at times, makes it seem like a book with multiple personality disorder. One of Lehrman's major themes is that today, "completing the feminist revolution is largely up to women themselves: it primarily involves completing their own personal evolutions"—gaining emotional independence and self-confidence, truly taking charge of their lives. That's wonderful advice, but does it have much to do with feminism per se, particularly since Lehrman acknowledges that many of the internal barriers that she argues are holding women back are shared by many men?

While Lehrman explicitly says that under liberal feminism, "[t]he personal ...is no longer political" in the sense that it does not require government action, she implies that it still requires collective action by women. And while urging feminists to dispense with "the notion of a 'women's movement' with a single voice and a single agenda," Lehrman seriously suggests "a revival of consciousness-raising groups." Then, on the same page, she emphasizes that "any type of artificial sisterhood is the antithesis of self-development, of individuality" and that true autonomy can only come from within.

In the end, *The Lipstick Proviso* left me with two thoughts. First, the basic message of the book is impressive and important: "An autonomous woman is not waiting to be rescued, by a man, a job, or a certain number of seats in Congress. Her primary source of approval resides within herself." Second, when we look at women's lives without considering those of men, we invariably miss much of the picture.

Contributing Editor Cathy Young (71774.1305@compuserve.com) is the author of the forthcoming Beyond the Gender Wars *(The Free Press).*

CHIP BOK

The Record Company, Rosie, Gave Me a Big Advance

By Brian Doherty

The Mansion on the Hill: Dylan, Young, Geffen, Springsteen, and the Head-On Collision of Rock and Commerce, by Fred Goodman, New York: Times Books, 431 pages, $25.00

America may or may not be a Christian nation. Still, a bit of wisdom from Paul's first epistle to Timothy has a tenacious hold on a segment of the modern, mostly liberal, imagination: "The love of money is the root of all evil." This quasi-religious sentiment can be detected at the heart of a multitude of modern attitudes, from soak-the-rich tax envy to adoration of "public" television over commercial television to a *Harper's* essay condemning overuse of psychomedication as much because international megacorporations make money off the drugs as because of anything inherently wrong with abusing them.

In *The Mansion on the Hill*, former *Rolling Stone* editor Fred Goodman examines aspects of the history of modern rock 'n' roll—the business and the music—through Paul's lenses. His thesis is that rock, which once functioned not as a huge industry but simply as an art form and a "secret language" for young free spirits, has been corrupted by the hegemony of the big money boys. Rock, that once-despised and socially dangerous bastard child of country, folk, blues, and Tin Pan Alley, became the cash engine behind Time Warner, America's biggest media conglomerate (and the only big record company still American-owned). Goodman's book is fun and fascinating for devotees of both rock and the machinations of the rich and famous, because of the stories it tells and the personalities it illuminates. Still, Goodman ultimately fails to make his point. Instead, he exposes the muddleheadedness of cultural criticism that has no base other than generalized animus against money and those who want to make some.

The theme Goodman purports to examine—the corruption of rock 'n' roll by the corporate sharks and assorted money-grubbing sharpies—is too huge and convoluted to be expressed in a unified narrative. Goodman thus chooses a handful of figures to stand in for larger trends. The businessmen whose tales he tells include Ray Riepen, founder of Boston's first big rock club, The Tea Party, and first free-form FM rock radio station, WBCN; Frank Barcelona and Dee Anthony of the leading rock booking agency Premier Talent; Albert Grossman, Bob Dylan's manager; Charlie Greene and Brian Stone, Sonny and Cher's first managers; Mario Medious, legendary FM promo man for Atlantic Records; Jon Landau, rock critic-turned-Springsteen-producer-and-manager; and, foremost, the most successful and wealthiest man in rock 'n' roll history—a man who never played a note of music himself—David Geffen.

Most of these gentlemen, to be sure, come across as concerned only with business, not music; if not entirely ethically disabled sleazes, they are at best fast-talking slicksters rather than serious devotees of rock as an art form. The story of how Greene and Stone managed to sell Sonny and Cher twice to the same record company by calling them different names is particularly amusing. But even after all of Goodman's anecdotes of the sometimes sleazy and sometimes just savvy and cash-conscious ways that his cast have made themselves rich in the rock industry, it's still uncertain how any of it has really, in and of itself, hurt the music, unless you just have something against the very, very rich. (Billionaire Geffen is among the richest—he touted himself, in 1990, as America's biggest taxpayer. He is also one of the Democratic Party's biggest funders.)

Bruce Springsteen: Is it wrong to make money writing songs imbued with a "social conscience?" Fred Goodman thinks so.

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The story of Geffen's rise and fall and rise is the book's centerpiece gem, an entertaining and precise exposition of the hows and whys of one man's achievement of enormous wealth. Geffen's business brilliance can best be grasped by the fact that he made his first million off *Laura Nyro*, of all people, a very briefly popular '60s singer/songwriter, author of such all-too-timely classics as "Wedding Bell Blues" and "Stoned Soul Picnic." By engaging in a dual manager/publisher relationship with Nyro—a stupid way to do business from the artist's perspective, because it's best to have a manager who will solely represent your interests in dealing with the likes of publishers—he made a million bucks for himself and cemented a reputation that helped convince Warner to bankroll a label, Asylum, for him to run.

Geffen thus became a label head as well as a publisher and manager, and launched the careers of Jackson Browne, the Eagles, and the whole popular mellow Southern California sound. He sold Asylum, ran Elektra for Warner from 1973 to 1975, and then left the music division for an ill-fated stint in Warner's film studios. By 1977, he was out of the business.

But in 1980 he returned and once again finagled Warner into financing the start-up of a new label, called Geffen Records. After high-profile and high-cash failures like Donna Summer, Elton John, and Neil Young (and the death of John Lennon), the Hollywood joke about the label became, "What's the difference between the *Titanic* and Geffen

Records? The *Titanic* had a band." The late '80s success of Guns n' Roses, though, helped Geffen sell his label, which was started with Warner's money yet fully owned by Geffen, to MCA for cash and loads of stock. Mere months later, when the Japanese firm Matsushita bought MCA, that stock made David Geffen a billionaire.

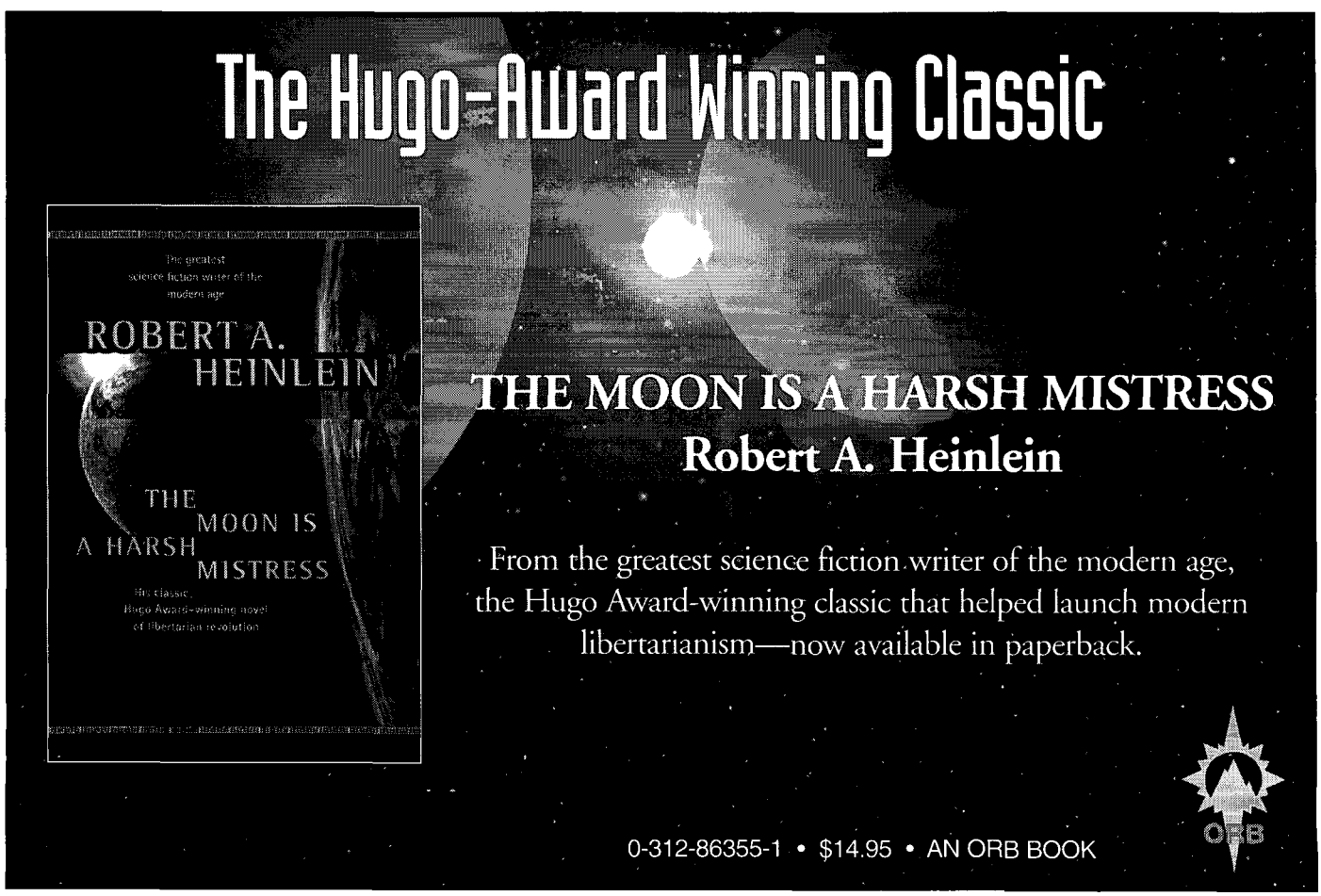
The book ends with what seems meant to be a horror-movie vision of Geffen, now running the new entertainment megaconglomerate Dreamworks SKG with Steven Spielberg and former Disney chief Jeff Katzenberg, beginning to feel his political oats and hoping for a Clinton administration berth. Not bad for a Jewish kid from a blue-collar neighborhood in Brooklyn without a college degree. Despite Goodman's horror, it's really quite an inspiring American success story, and nowhere does Goodman succeed in linking Geffen's successes with any harm to rock as art. Sure, you might hate those early '80s Elton John records—who doesn't?—but is that because of "the collision of rock and commerce" or just because Elton didn't have a strong batch of songs in him at the time?

Goodman has held the fake dichotomy his book tries to elucidate close to his breast since the days of the folk music boom of the early '60s: the idea of folk culture vs. junk culture, the folkie ideologues' insistence that other kinds of popular music (and this included rock in these pre-Dylan-going-electric days) were nothing but "entertainment that...consumer society produced solely for the sake of being sold."

Dylan, in Goodman's tale, smuggled that folk authenticity into rock, and the classic mid-to-late-'60s music that makes up the pantheon of baby-boomer rock mythology soon was wrapped in it as well. With very little content analysis—try arguing with examples, as Goodman doesn't, the depth and sophistication of most '60s rock gods—Goodman asserts that rock 'n' roll used to *mean* something, man, back before the money boys and sharks took over. He wants rock that can "invest a humdrum life with meaning" and echo "the aspirations of the earlier underground movement," music about "community, not money or stardom...a celebration of rock and roll as the best part of themselves." At his vaguest—and when discussing what's best in rock he (like most others) becomes hopelessly vague—he wants the music to "include a quest for legitimacy, values, and authenticity."

It might be true that the quality of music is buoyed when the artists' motivations are financially "pure," at least to the degree that the musicians make the music because they sincerely love it and want to express something with it. In addition to all the businessmen, three rock performers' stories are central to the book (though the businessmen get more attention, and come across as more interesting to boot): Bob Dylan, Neil Young, and Bruce Springsteen. They are all mostly painted as having begun, at least, with pure artistic motives (although an early hanger-on of Young's first big band, Buffalo Springfield, complained that if you "promise them a Maserati, they'll follow you anywhere").

Springsteen's keyboardist Danny Federici supplies the poignant quote that Goodman uses to cap off what he portrays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as the tragedy of Bruce Springsteen's rise to fame and wealth. It serves as a summation of the book's message, with the E Street Band standing in for rock as a whole: "We started out as a band, which turned into a super, giant corporate money-making machine."

But *why* that happened is one point that Goodman's anti-money stance doesn't let him directly confront. It happened because the E Street Band did their job as a band so well, in the ears of millions, that those millions wanted to buy their music and wanted to see them perform. And because, way back in the beginning, when they were still just a band, Springsteen and his then-manager chose to enlist the help of Columbia Records (now owned by Sony) in the manufacturing and selling (and ownership) of his music.

Old-school rock critics of the Goodman variety, because of their backgrounds in a sort of vague '60s-inspired radicalism, feel it necessary to rebel against the Corporate Man, yet they usually only start to complain when everything works too well. To avoid hypocrisy, mustn't you admit that Springsteen in fact sold out the instant he, an obscure nobody, signed on the dotted line with the corporation? Instead, it's only when he becomes very, very rich selling his music that something is seen to have gone terribly wrong.

An entire world of rock music—where much of today's best rock comes from—is in fact produced by tiny bedroom capitalists out of surplus income without any expectation of widespread fame or wealth. Strangely, old-school anti-capitalist rock critics like Goodman are usually the last to mention this. You'd think a book about rock vs. commerce would at least show signs of knowing that the world of independent, underground rock exists, but this one doesn't.

Goodman's dichotomy—art vs. money—is falsified by the reality he refuses to confront. That selling the art can bring in tons of money doesn't mean that money is necessarily defeating art. It just means lots of people want to buy the art. Goodman also shows, but refuses to tell, how the very infrastructure of clubs and booking that helped bring rock to the people came about only because money-grubbing sharpies like Barcelona made it happen —and they made it happen because they knew people's desire for rock music could equal money for them.

Goodman pays lip service to the idea that it is "possible to both achieve commercial success and rise above it [but it] requires an absolute faith and focus in the intrinsic value of the work itself rather than smart career moves." But he doesn't bother to explain why commercial success is something one must "rise above," if it comes about from doing grand work.

The extended example Goodman uses to dramatize his point is singularly poorly chosen. He tells the story of Bruce Springsteen in greater detail than that of any other musician. Goodman shows us Springsteen's beginnings as a confused kid under the tutelage of sharpie Mike Appel, who simultaneously managed him, ran the production company through which his contracts were signed, and owned his publishing. He then chronicles the confused adult who escaped Appel through a series of lawsuits prompted by rock critic/social climber Jon Landau. Landau ran *Rolling Stone*'s record review section even as he worked as a producer for major record labels. He was originally slated to produce the first record by his pals the J. Geils Band, but couldn't finish the job. So when the record came out, he just gave it a glowing review in *Rolling Stone*, without mentioning his connection with the band.

David Geffen embodies quite an inspiring American success story, and nowhere does Fred Goodman succeed in linking Geffen's successes with any harm to rock as art.

Landau became one of Springsteen's biggest fans in the rock critic fraternity, boosting Springsteen's profile enormously with his famous quote, used by Columbia in ads, that "I have seen rock 'n' roll future, and its name is Bruce Springsteen." In a move that could be considered insider trading, Landau talked up the value of Springsteen and then bought in cheap. After producing Springsteen's breakthrough album, 1975's *Born to Run*, and guiding Springsteen through the morass of lawsuits to extricate himself from Appel, Landau came out at the other end Springsteen's manager, producer, and best friend and confidant.

He also began changing Springsteen's personality, or at least his image. The scruffy, rock/youth-myth–oriented Springsteen was fed books about Woody Guthrie and imbued with a "social conscience." Landau encouraged him to record an all-acoustic solo album of dark meditations on poor Americans gone wrong, *Nebraska*, in 1982. While not a smashing commercial success, it provided an even stronger critical push that helped propel Springsteen's breakthrough to the next level of superstardom.

Springsteen and Landau's next move shows the ambiguity of Goodman's characterization of "smart career moves." The fact is, it's difficult to know what a smart career move will be beforehand.

Springsteen's follow-up to *Nebraska*, *Born in the U.S.A.*, became a mega-selling monstrosity—something that Goodman bitterly quotes a Columbia executive calling "a great marketing experience"—but it was by no means a sure thing. And while Columbia, of course, did all it could to push the album, there's no reason to believe that Springsteen made the work with anything less than artistically pure motives.

In fact, the Guthrie-style ideology that Landau fed him put Springsteen squarely against the morning-in-America Reagan re-election *Zeitgeist*. Sure, many listeners—including Reagan's campaign staff—managed to misread the LP's title track, a bitter rant from an ex-vet, as mere patriotic effusion. But there's no way Springsteen, or Columbia, could have known that. In the way the album's opening title track and its conclusion, "My Hometown," cast themselves in opposition to the prevailing political winds, and the way the hit single "I'm on Fire" emulated the stark music of *Nebraska*, *Born in the U.S.A.* was in some respects an artistically daring move.

It still made tons of money for Springsteen, and for many charities for poor American workers. Goodman pokes at Springsteen for not putting *enough* of his money where his mouth is when it comes

to charity. He has a point. While I hate to pretend that Springsteen is obligated to share his wealth with thousands of strangers, it does grate to hear someone who is fabulously successful from capitalism excoriate "the system's" flaws, without acknowledging that he has the resources to right—all by himself—the flaws he sees (families without enough money to buy new cars, the jobless) for thousands of people.

Landau for much of this book is portrayed as an unethical, anti-art, money-grubbing climber. Still, he is the man who imbued Springsteen with the "social conscience" that so many bleeding-heart critics loved about him. The story of *Born in the U.S.A.* is more complicated, then, than the simple moral about marketing overpowering art that Goodman tries to derive.

Goodman provides a clue to the complicated relation between money and authenticity when he points out that there was an audience in the early '60s Boston folk scene who rejected anything out of New York because they thought it "had some kind of manufactured zeal behind it." An anti-commercial ethos, it seems, can sell. (Goodman tells of a Columbia employee bragging that its corporate money, in record ads, kept the radically anti-capitalist underground press of the late '60s alive.) There are ironies about marketing and commercialism and money that Goodman misses.

Money doesn't just follow grubbing after money. Money follows anything that people want, and people want, or are capable of wanting, that beautiful and mysterious music that Goodman in his youth called a "secret language" as much as cheap garbage. People's desire to pursue that secret language of rock is what built the industry Goodman looks at cross-eyed in this book, and what made American record companies a favorite foreign takeover target in the 1980s. Markets and money make stories that are more complicated than Goodman thinks. Luckily, he is honest enough as a reporter that people looking for those more complicated stories can find them here as well. ◆

Brian Doherty (bmdoherty@aol.com) is assistant editor of REASON. *He runs Cherry Smash Records, a small, independent record label.*

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Star Scientist

By Kenneth Silber

Billions and Billions: Thoughts on Life and Death at the Brink of the Millennium, by Carl Sagan, New York: Random House, 256 pages, $24.00

For nearly two decades before his death in December 1996, Carl Sagan was arguably the most famous scientist in America. Author of numerous books and articles aimed at a general audience, host of the public-television series *Cosmos*, and frequent guest on *The Tonight Show*, Sagan addressed subjects ranging from human prehistory to the search for extraterrestrial intelligence to the consequences of nuclear war. He became virtually an all-purpose explainer of and spokesman for the scientific enterprise. His own research in planetary astronomy, respectable though it was, was distinctly secondary to his skills as a popularizer in ensuring his fame.

In many respects, Sagan was well-suited for the role of scientist-as-celebrity. His writing style was lucid, elegant, and often dramatic. At its best, it conveyed a sense of the epic quality of cosmic and biological evolution. He was an adroit public speaker who garnered attention through minor eccentricities such as the plosive "b" with which he pronounced "billions." (Yet, claims Sagan in *Billions and Billions*, he never mouthed the title's redundant phrase; rather, it was Johnny Carson who did so, in skits caricaturing his favorite astronomer.) Self-promotion was an obvious, and oddly appealing, feature of Sagan's public persona, as when the camera in *Cosmos* lingered endlessly on the host's awestruck heavenward gaze.

Sagan was an advocate as much as an expositor. He was a persuasive proponent of space exploration; unlike many astronomers, he envisioned a grand human future in space, not just a series of ever-more sophisticated data-gathering probes. He was a passionate debunker of astrology, alien abductions, channeling, and other forms of pseudoscience and irrationalism. Sagan pointed out repeatedly that widespread scientific illiteracy is a dangerous thing in a society heavily dependent on science and technology. He did more than his share to combat that danger.

To be sure, at times he succumbed to the occupational hazards of the science popularizer: the oversimplification of esoteric ideas, the blurring of distinctions between speculation and established fact, and the dressing-up of personal or political views in the mantle of scientific authority. Sagan overstated the certainty of climate models showing a possible "nuclear winter," and erroneously predicted a spate of cold weather and darkened skies resulting from the oil fires of the Persian Gulf War. He also gave undue credence to the highly speculative notion, little-accepted among neuroscientists, of a "triune brain," in which the human cerebrum coexists uneasily with distinct vestiges of reptilian and early mammalian anatomy. The triune brain theory enabled Sagan to denounce behaviors of which he disapproved—such as Cold War–era defense spending—as emanations of primitive brain parts.

Carl Sagan was an advocate as much as an expositor. He pointed out repeatedly that widespread scientific illiteracy is a dangerous thing in a society heavily dependent on science and technology. He did more than his share to combat that danger.

Billions and Billions, a posthumously published collection of essays, reflects Sagan's diversity of interests—as well as his tendency to combine brilliant scientific exposition with less-than-convincing political argument. The book is divided into three sections. The first, titled "The Power and Beauty of Quantification," contains largely apolitical essays on science and mathematics. The second, "What are Conservatives Conserving?," is a set of warnings of environmental dangers, with particular emphasis on the thinning ozone layer and global warming. The final part, "Where Hearts and Minds Collide," covers a range of topics at the intersection of science and politics, and ends with Sagan's reflections on the illness that eventually would take his life.

The book opens with its title essay, in which Sagan discusses the public's growing but imperfect familiarity with the large numbers used in astronomy, economics, and other fields. His own association with "billions" came at a time when "millions" had become a bit passé, he notes, and soon "trillions" will be commonly evoked in reports of national debts, distances to nearby stars, and more. This leads to an explanation of the workings and benefits of exponential notation in describing very large numbers. A subsequent essay elucidates the concept of exponential growth, drawing upon examples that involve chessboards, bacteria colonies, world population, and radioactive decay.

A discussion of wave phenomena, ranging from splashes in a bathtub to gamma rays in space, displays a similar inventiveness in the use of examples and analogies. Less successful is "Monday-Night Hunters," which draws links between modern sports and prehistoric survival tactics; this essay includes an odd, first-person vignette of life in the Pleistocene era. The book's first section closes with a tour of astronomy's fast-moving frontiers. Sagan sketches out current scientific evidence and speculation regarding planets in other solar systems; possible past, or present, life on Mars and Saturn's moon Titan; and the origin and fate of the universe. Sticking closely to his formal discipline, Sagan is at his most precise and authoritative.

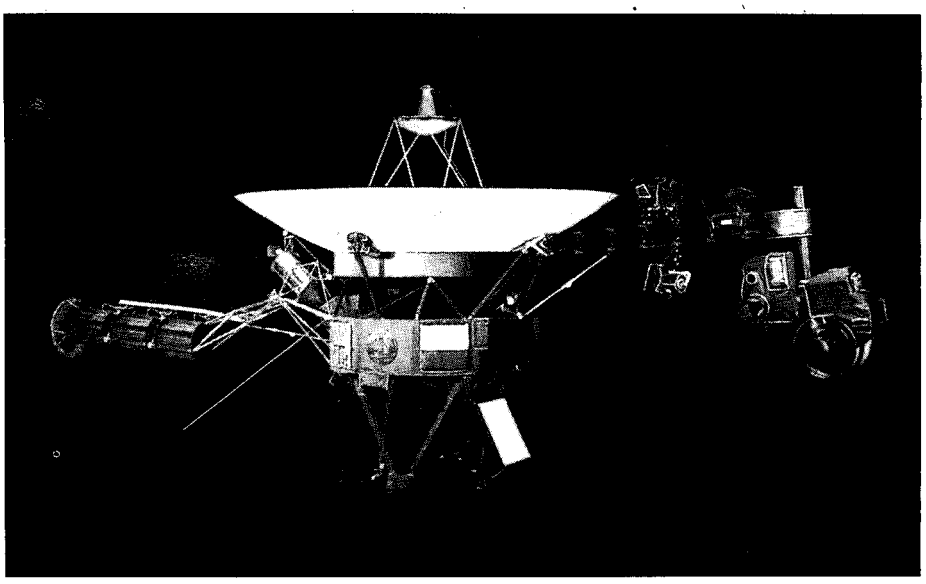
In the section "What are Conservatives Conserving?," Sagan delivers a jeremiad about the environment, while disdaining to grapple with opposing arguments made by conservatives, libertarians, or anybody else. A highly pessimistic view of global warming is accompanied by a warning that powerful interests are beholden to fossil fuels and thus seek to deny the problem. The idea that *environmentalists* might overstate the problem for reasons of their

own is not even contemplated, much less explored. On the issue of ozone depletion, an adept explanation of the chemistry involved is marred by Sagan's grotesque musing that there is some "remote cosmic justice" in lighter-skinned people getting skin cancer, since whites were mainly responsible for inventing ozone-thinning chlorofluorocarbons.

Sagan's environmental proposals emphasize the development of solar energy, wind power, and other "alternative" energy sources. He correctly notes the growing competitiveness of solar energy in certain market niches, such as rural electrification in the Third World. Yet his prescriptions are heavily weighted toward government mandates, research subsidies, fuel taxes, and the like. The environmental benefits of markets—or of market-oriented regulations such as tradable pollution allowances—receive little notice. His mindset is that of a Progressive-era planner, confident of his ability to guide new technologies into socially useful roles.

The book's final third is dominated by the matters of "life and death" evoked in *Billions and Billions*'s subtitle. In an essay originally published in 1988 in *Parade* and the Soviet magazine *Ogonyok*, Sagan presents a grim recounting of the histories of the United States and the Soviet Union. Sagan strains to present the superpowers as more-or-less equally culpable in the Cold War—even placing minor or debatable American acts, such as the CIA's mining of Nicaraguan harbors, alongside vast Soviet atrocities, such as Stalin's forced collectivization of agriculture. Nonetheless, as Sagan laments, the *glasnost*-era Soviets saw fit to censor their published version, despite assurances to the contrary.

Also reprinted is a speech given by Sagan that same year at a rededication of the Eternal Light Peace Memorial in Gettysburg. His theme is the danger posed by modern weapons of mass destruction, which are orders of magnitude more powerful than the arms of the Civil War. Yet Sagan is far too much of a technophile to seek solutions in a wholesale dismantlement of industrial society. In "The Twentieth Century," he notes that modern technology also has wrought much good: longer lifespans, greater literacy, expanded leisure time. Furthermore, this century has brought vast advances in every branch of science—a fact that Sagan celebrates, while acknowledging science's tendency to strip away cherished assumptions and beliefs.



NASA

Voyager spacecraft sent to explore Jupiter: Sagan was a persuasive proponent of space exploration; unlike many astronomers, he envisioned a grand human future in space.

In an essay on abortion, Sagan makes his own effort at such stripping away. He argues that the fetus's capacity for rudimentary thought—measured by electrical activity in the brain—is the proper criterion of its personhood. Since fetal brain activity does not occur until the third trimester, this criterion would allow abortions during the first six months—and thus the position of *Roe v. Wade* is arrived at on completely different grounds. While this argument is highly unlikely to convince pro-life activists or, for that matter, supporters of late-term abortions, and is weakened by the tendentiousness of Sagan's tone, it is at least an attempt to bring fresh thinking into a deadlocked debate.

Among the high points of *Billions and Billions* is "The Rules of the Game," a clever discussion of ethical principles. Sagan begins with an amusing summary of the well-known golden rule and less-familiar dicta such as the iron rule ("Do unto others as you like, before they do it unto you") and the tin rule ("Suck up to those above you, and abuse those below"). Then, drawing upon the work of social scientist Robert Axelrod and others, he recounts how a tit-for-tat strategy—a mixture of cooperation and retaliation—proved successful in computerized game-theory tournaments. Sagan concludes, among other things, that moral questions are not beyond experimental investigation.

Sagan's essay "In the Valley of the Shadow" recounts the ups and downs of his struggle against myelodysplasia, a bone-marrow disease so rare and little-understood that Sagan, for all his transdisciplinary knowledge, had never previously heard of it. Sagan writes movingly about the emotional support he received from his family, friends, doctors, and people who had never met him. Despite his long-standing skepticism of religion, he was buoyed to learn that thousands had prayed for him in a Manhattan cathedral and at a Hindu gathering on the banks of the Ganges. His final entry, dated October 1996, strikes a note of cautious optimism about his recovery; some two months later, he was dead.

That loss is felt far beyond his immediate circle. Carl Sagan was interesting even when he was wrong, and even those who disagreed with him were compelled to recognize his formidable intelligence and intellectual curiosity. He provided a much-needed voice for science, and a living rebuke to the many scientists who regard public understanding of their work as a secondary or impossible mission. Future popularizers of science will be hard-pressed to match his eloquence and range. ◆

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Prohibition's Past and Present

By Jacob Sullum

Hep-Cats, Narcs, and Pipe Dreams: A History of America's Romance with Illegal Drugs, by Jill Jonnes, New York: Scribner, 510 pages, $30.00

Smoke and Mirrors: The War on Drugs and the Politics of Failure, by Dan Baum, Boston: Little, Brown, 396 pages, $24.95

American Women and the Repeal of Prohibition, by Kenneth D. Rose, New York: New York University Press, 215 pages, $40.00

Although the repeal of drug prohibition is still opposed by the vast majority of Americans, during the past decade the idea has made noticeable inroads among intellectuals. Indeed, the critique of prohibition is so familiar (at least in vague outline) to journalists, academics, and legal thinkers that people are not only having second thoughts about the drug laws, they are having second thoughts about their second thoughts. Before she wrote *Hep-Cats, Narcs, and Pipe Dreams*, says Jill Jonnes, she was inclined to believe that "the solution to the drug problem was some form of legalization." But "my own extensive research into the history of drug culture gradually convinced me that no society can afford to be conciliatory on drugs." This sort of conversion may cause consternation among reformers, but in a way it's encouraging, and perhaps it will help stimulate productive debate.

Jonnes's change of heart should not be lightly dismissed. Her research is indeed extensive, and the results often make for fascinating reading, especially when she explores drug use by film stars in the teens and '20s, by jazz musicians and Harlem hipsters in the '30s and '40s, by beatniks in the '50s, and by various counterculture types in the '60s. A journalist with a Ph.D. in history from Johns Hopkins, she appreciates the importance of social and cultural context in defining the function and meaning of drug use, and she gracefully intertwines material from interviews, press reports, books, movies, and songs to recreate the textures of various drug scenes.

But there is a jarring disconnect between Jonnes's rich, often subtle narrative and her hackneyed, simplistic policy recommendations, which include such drug warrior standards as crop eradication, "more police and drug agents," coercive drug treatment, and "regaining true control of our borders." Impressive as the details of her account are, they do not make much of a case for her more-of-the-same prescriptions.

Indeed, Jonnes's history often gets in the way of her conclusions. To support her argument that the Harrison Narcotics Act of 1914 was amply justified, she cites an "epidemic" of opiate and cocaine addiction that she says generated "[r]ising grassroots alarm over anti-social drug abuse." She estimates there were 350,000 cocaine and opiate addicts in the United States at the turn of the century, when the population was about 76 million. Later in the book, she estimates that 2.5 million Americans were addicted to heroin and cocaine in the mid-1990s, when the U.S. population had grown to about 260 million. In other words, at a time when these drugs were legal, inexpensive, and readily available over the counter or through the mail, about 0.5 percent of the population became addicted. After eight decades of prohibition, the proportion had doubled (even without taking into account addiction to prescription sedatives, narcotics other than heroin, and stimulants other than cocaine). On the face of it, these numbers do not say much for the necessity or effectiveness of the drug laws.

Kenneth Rose argues that the degradation of civil order caused by Prohibition led to its repeal.

But the truth is that we don't really know how many "addicts" there are, let alone how many there were in 1900. Jonnes says we have about half a million heroin addicts. She doesn't cite a source, but this is a commonly used number. Whether it's accurate is another matter. During the '70s, recalls Drug Policy Foundation President Arnold Trebach in the 1993 book *Legalize It?*, various official sources offered estimates ranging from 215,000 to "more than 800,000." Jonnes also claims there are "two million cocaine addicts," including snorters and smokers. (Later she describes them as the "2 million who have taken to crack," leaving out users of cocaine powder, but I think this is a mistake.) Again, she does not cite a source.

According to the 1997 *National Drug Control Strategy*, there were 582,000 "frequent users" of cocaine in 1995, including 255,000 crack users. These numbers are based on the percentage of respondents in the National Household Survey on Drug Abuse who said they had used the drug at least once a week in the previous year, so they are not necessarily "addicts" (unless we are prepared to call someone who drinks a beer every Saturday night an alcoholic). On the other hand, the Household Survey does not include the homeless, prisoners, or people in residential drug treatment centers. Jonnes's estimate implies that more than 70 percent of the nation's cocaine addicts—at least 1.4 million people, which is nearly the size of the total prison population—live on the streets, behind bars, or in treatment centers. This seems implausible, and she offers no evidence that it's so.

Estimates of addiction at the turn of the century are even less reliable. Jonnes seems to get her estimate of 250,000 opiate addicts in 1900 from Yale psychiatrist David F. Musto, author of *The American Disease: Origins of Narcotics Control*, an influential history originally published in 1973. Musto's estimate, in turn, is based on contem-

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poraneous reports, which were often impressionistic and contradictory, and extrapolations by other scholars, which depend on questionable assumptions. Trebach warns that "estimates of addiction rates then and now varied so widely that no responsible scholar could rely upon them, except in very general terms." Jonnes also uses an estimate of 200,000 "cocaine addicts" in 1902 (which she cuts in half to account for "some overlap in these two groups of addicts"). She attributes the figure to the American Pharmaceutical Association. Yet according to Trebach, the APA's number referred to "users" (not just addicts) of various "habit-forming drugs" (not just cocaine).

Which raises the question of who Jonnes has in mind when she talks about "addicts." Are these people who perceive their own drug use as a problem? Apparently not. "It is well known in the drug world that most addicts will not seek treatment except under some sort of duress," she writes. "Nor, for the most part, will they stick with it unless forced." Are they criminals and troublemakers? Not necessarily. Early in this century, Jonnes says, most addicts were "genteel, middle-class women" hooked on patent medicines or doctor-prescribed painkillers. Are they unproductive burdens on society? As Jonnes notes, the turn-of-the-century surgeon Dr. William Halsted, chairman of the Department of Surgery at Johns Hopkins, led a brilliant career while secretly addicted to morphine.

Since not everyone who uses drugs frequently enough to be called an addict fits the stereotype of an unemployed, down-and-out junkie breaking into your car to steal the radio, perhaps we should distinguish among addicts based on their behavior. In other words, perhaps we should treat them as individuals instead of numbers. Jonnes seems reluctant to take this approach, perhaps because it implies that addiction per se is not a problem crying out for a government solution. She is willing to throw addicts in jail. She is eager to force them into "treatment." One thing she is not prepared to do is leave them alone.

Jonnes not only assumes that every addict is a menace, she implies that every drug user is an addict in the making. Once in a while she alludes to people who have managed to use illegal drugs without suffering significant harm, but the overall impression is one of disrupted relationships, ruined careers, and shortened lives. She presents the worst cases—Charlie Parker, Billie Holiday, Len Bias—as if they were typical. Without comment or qualification, she quotes other people's reckless exaggerations about the consequences of drug use, such as, "Squalor, poverty, starvation, theft, prostitution and murder: these are the inevitable concomitants of cocaine." Jonnes herself calls cocaine "thoroughly addicting." Yet later she tells us, "While the middle-class cocaine epidemic proved to many a boomer that even they could get into deep trouble with drugs, the majority emerged unscathed." Even that concession is an understatement. In the 1995 Household Survey, 10.3 percent of the respondents had tried cocaine (including crack), 1.7 percent had used it in the previous year, 0.7 percent had done

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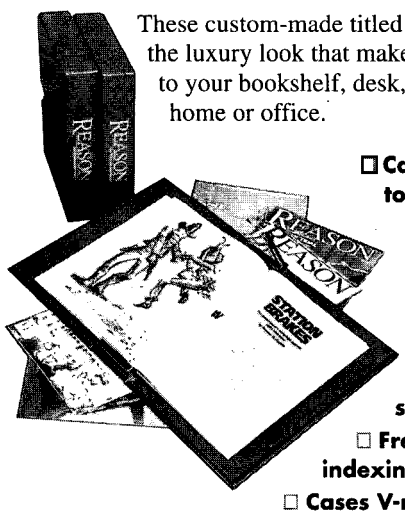

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so in the past month, and 0.3 percent were using it weekly or more often. In other words, about 3 percent of the people who had tried cocaine were using it as often as once a week. How "thoroughly addicting" is that?

Jonnes wants to have it both ways. She chastises affluent baby boomers for enjoying cocaine with impunity and then abandoning the inner-city poor to the depredations of crack addiction. Yet she rebels at the idea that anyone, even a spoiled yuppie, could use illegal drugs and still be OK. She tries to square the circle with formulations like, "Potentially anyone can become caught up in drugs, and yet the reality is that some are more vulnerable than others."

The reality is that a small minority of illegal drug users "get into deep trouble," causing serious harm to themselves or others. In this respect, controlled substances resemble alcohol. Depending upon who is doing the estimating, 5 to 10 percent of drinkers are said to be alcoholics. Yet that fact does not prevent us from distinguishing between responsible drinkers and abusers, between the alcoholic who holds down a job and the rummy in the gutter, between the drunk who hurts only himself and the one who runs down pedestrians or beats his wife. Recognizing the appeal of the alcohol analogy, Jonnes resists it mightily. At the beginning of the book, at the end, and several times in between, she insists that the currently illegal drugs should not, on any account, be compared to alcohol. "The fact is that drugs are very different from alcohol—and far more dangerous," she asserts in the preface, yet she never substantiates this claim.

There's a reason for that. As measured both by the long-term health consequences of heavy use and by its involvement in accidents and crime, alcohol is more dangerous than any popular illegal drug. As measured by the percentage of experimenters who become heavy users, it seems to be no less "addictive" than heroin or cocaine. Tellingly, Jonnes claims that the concept of drug addiction originated with the opiates. In fact, as the sociologist Harry G. Levine showed in a 1978 article published by the *Journal of Studies on Alcohol*, "the idea that drugs are inherently addicting was first systematically worked out for alcohol and then extended to other substances. Long before opium was popularly accepted as addicting, alcohol was so regarded."

In her effort to distinguish illegal substances from a familiar drug that we manage to live with despite its dangers, Jonnes resorts to the notion that "anyone who is using drugs is seeking strictly to get high," while people drink alcoholic beverages for other reasons: "to relax" and "for the pleasure of the taste." Even if this were true, so what? Is there something inherently wrong with trying to alter your state of consciousness? Isn't that what drinkers are doing when they seek "to relax" with a cocktail or beer? The distinction is specious in any case. Consider marijuana. As with alcohol, people use it for a variety of purposes: "to relax," to enhance social occasions, to stimulate creativity, to heighten their enjoyment of food, music, or movies. They even bake it into brownies "for the pleasure of the taste."

It's a measure of Jill Jonnes's blindness to drug prohibition's impact on individual rights that she alludes to it just once, and then in an approving way. The index to her book has no entries for civil liberties, privacy, the Fourth Amendment, or the Constitution.

The alcohol double standard is also apparent in Jonnes's discussion of drug use during pregnancy. There is clear evidence that heavy drinking during pregnancy causes birth defects, including deformed features and mental retardation. This Jonnes mentions not at all. On the other hand, she endorses the notion, repudiated even by the National Institute on Drug Abuse, that babies exposed to cocaine in the womb are damaged for life: born underweight and sick, retarded emotionally and intellectually even when no physical abnormalities are apparent.

But as former *Wall Street Journal* reporter Dan Baum notes in *Smoke and Mirrors: The War on Drugs and the Politics of Failure*, by 1989 "researchers cautioned that the lives of poor, crack-using women were bad for babies in so many ways that there was no way to isolate crack as the primary cause of their infants' health problems." Observers who attributed babies' health or behavior at birth and subsequent developmental difficulties to cocaine exposure did not take into account factors such as prenatal care, nutrition, the use of other drugs, and the quality of the home environment. Trying to assess the impact of cocaine itself, researchers at the Yerkes Primate Center in Atlanta injected monkeys with the drug throughout pregnancy. "Their babies were unaffected," Baum reports. "Researchers of human 'crack babies' furthermore found that the effects of cocaine wore off within a few months and that such babies who were well fed, loved, and properly stimulated could recover completely."

Baum is not only more skeptical about the harm attributed to drugs, but also more sensitive to the harm caused by the war on them. Whereas Jonnes sees a worthy struggle marred by occasional exaggeration, corruption, and excessively harsh sentences, Baum sees a series of publicity stunts and political games that have wreaked havoc in the streets and the courtroom. "The War on Drugs is about a lot of things," he says, "but only rarely is it really about drugs." Tracing the development of U.S. drug policy from Nixon on, he skillfully tells a tale of demagoguery, cluelessness, and hysteria that is alternately amusing and depressing, alarming and infuriating.

For surreal comic relief, it's hard to beat Baum's account of Nixon's historic meeting with Elvis Presley, wherein the King of Rock 'n' Roll, "a dopehound of legendary excess," was dubbed a "special assistant" in the Bureau of Narcotics and Dangerous Drugs. Equally entertaining is the discussion of the ever-escalating estimates for the amount of property stolen by heroin addicts each year. In one memo, a Nixon administration official put the figure at $18 billion—*15 times* the FBI's estimate for all property crime. Baum also reminds us of the drug paraphernalia panic that led McDonald's to replace all of its coffee stirrers because of a false rumor that they were popular as cocaine spoons.

The war on drugs, of course, has also

had far more serious consequences. Baum details how "the drug exception to the Bill of Rights" was carved out, one piece at a time, while attorneys who thought they knew the law were dumbfounded time and again by how far the Supreme Court was willing to go in the quest for a drug-free America. Among other things, the Court has endorsed the use of search warrants based on information from anonymous (and possibly nonexistent) tipsters; warrantless trespassing and surveillance from the air; a "good faith" exception to the exclusionary rule; government-mandated, suspicionless drug testing; and detention of suspected drug couriers pending bowel movements. It's a measure of Jill Jonnes's blindness to prohibition's impact on individual rights that she alludes to this trend just once (in a discussion of drug testing), and then in an approving way. The index to her book has no entries for civil liberties, privacy, the Fourth Amendment, or the Constitution.

Baum, by contrast, is clearly disturbed by the consequences of drug war fever. One of his sadder stories concerns the calmer, more rational approach to drug policy that emerged in the mid-to-late '70s, during the Ford and Carter administrations. This was a time when public officials (including Carter) were not afraid to advocate decriminalization of marijuana, when they were prepared to make distinctions among illegal drugs, between use and abuse, and between adults and children. The National Organization for the Reform of Marijuana Laws was a major player in Washington policy circles: The president's drug czar consulted the group and went to its parties. (The latter habit, as Baum explains, turned out to be a big mistake.) For a variety of reasons—including a scandal over drug use by White House officials and parental alarm about rising pot smoking by teenagers—that brief era of relative enlightenment came to an end, replaced by the mindlessness of "Just Say No" and "zero tolerance."

And now even an otherwise sophisticated writer like Jonnes wants us to abandon our critical faculties when it comes to illegal drugs. Her discussion of legalization is filled with tendentious assertions like, "when discussing legalization what we're really talking about is crack cocaine." It's understandable that a prohibitionist would prefer to focus on crack, currently the drug with the most fearsome reputation. And certainly it's true that crack has to be part of the debate over legalization. But marijuana is by far the most popular illegal drug, used in the past year by 8.4 percent of the respondents in the 1995 Household Survey, compared to 0.5 percent for crack. In terms of arrests, pot is the most significant drug, accounting for about two-fifths of the total. "[I]f anything is clear from the past twenty-five years of drug warfare," writes Baum, "it is that marijuana—not crack, cocaine, or heroin—is politically the most important illegal drug. Precisely because it doesn't kill people who use it, spawn gun battles in city streets, enrich foreign drug lords, or inspire women to abandon their babies, marijuana separates drug policy for public welfare from drug policy for public relations. Without the marijuana ban, the country's 'drug problem' would be tiny."

Yet Jonnes never makes a case for marijuana prohibition, beyond trotting out "amotivational syndrome" and warning us that it's bad for teenagers to get high every day. Nor does she address the legal status of the psychedelics, even though she devotes considerable space to Aldous Huxley, Timothy Leary, and other famous "psychonauts." Instead she offers us crackheads and heroin addicts, implying that this small minority represents everyone who uses illegal drugs.

As Kenneth D. Rose, a historian at California State University, Chico, shows in *American Women and the Repeal of Prohibition,* the people who supported a ban on alcohol were also fond of extreme examples. A 19th-century poster depicted "The Drunkard's Progress" as steps up and down a bridge, beginning with "Step 1: A glass with a Friend" and ending with "Step 6: Poverty and Disease," "Step 7: Forsaken by Friends," "Step 8: Desperation and crime," and "Step 9: Death by suicide." Under the bridge were the drunkard's abandoned wife and child. This sort of propaganda—based on real, though atypical, experiences—might shake Jonnes's confidence in her premise that "drugs are very different from alcohol."

Indeed, the rhetoric of temperance campaigners, and the fears underlying it, would be familiar to anyone following the

The Stance Of Atlas by Peter Erickson examines the philosophy of Ayn Rand.

Ayn Rand's major teachings are considered in detail. In addition to this, special attention is given to the relation of her philosophy of Objectivism to Einstein's theory of relativity and also to Dialectical Materialism.

Ayn Rand's rejection of collectivism is not disputed. Her position on the efficacy of reason remains—also her acceptance of freewill.

Ayn Rand's epistemological and metaphysical teachings are subjected to extensive criticism. Her attempt to solve the problem of universals is shown to be a failure. *The Stance Of Atlas* actually provides the correct solution. She believed, incorrectly, that Objectivism has the key to answering the problem of induction. *The Stance Of Atlas* shows that this problem was basically solved by a forgotten English logician early in this century. Contrary to Rand's Objectivism, it is established that reason is open to the possibility of God's existence.

Ayn Rand's attempt to found a new morality is shown to be less than what she took it to be. The defense of fractional reserve banking made by Alan Greenspan in Rand's book on capitalism is refuted.

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contemporary drug policy debate. This is how the American Temperance Society described alcohol use in the early 19th century: "If some fatal plague, of a contagious character, were imported into our country, and had commenced its ravages in our cities, we should see the most prompt and vigorous measures at once adopted to repress and extinguish it: but what are the most fearful plagues that ever carried death and havoc in their train through the eastern countries compared with this? They are only occasional; this is perennial."

After the temperance movement achieved its ultimate goal with the passage of the 18th Amendment in 1919, critics troubled by the unintended consequences were not treated kindly. A dry Kansas City physician was outraged by Pauline Sabin, a prominent Republican who led the Women's Organization for National Prohibition Reform: "Mrs. Sabin doesn't know what she's talking about. She didn't see the children I saw. In the winter the children of drunkards froze. The parents weren't low and depraved. They were drunk and they forgot their children." Opponents of repeal were also fond of the class argument much prized by Jonnes—that rich people who can afford intoxication don't care what will happen to the poor. In a letter to Sabin, the head of the National Democratic Law Enforcement League asked, "Are we not right in saying that it is not the protected woman of wealth but the women who toil who will suffer should the old conditions return—the wives of laboring men, the mothers of little children who have no millions to separate them from the devastation that liquor brings to the home?"

In truth, as Rose shows, women of all classes (and various political orientations) were involved in the repeal movement. They included many former supporters of Prohibition, Sabin among them, who were dismayed when the liquor-free world they'd been promised did not materialize. Like the drys, the women who advocated repeal said they wanted to protect the home, but they argued that now it was threatened by Prohibition rather than alcohol. Gangsters attracted to the new black market were shooting at each other in neighborhoods that were once considered safe, sometimes in broad daylight. Illicit suppliers were not particular about their customers, and many mothers believed their children had easier access to alcohol under Prohibition than they'd had when the stuff was legal. They also felt that Prohibition had glamorized drinking, and they worried that rampant official corruption and widespread disobedience were combining to undermine respect for the law.

Reformers recognized, too, that zealous enforcement of Prohibition could lead to a literal invasion of the home. Rose tells the story of a 1924 raid that turned up a tiny quantity of liquor in the home of a prominent Portland, Oregon, businessman who was holding a charity ball. The search warrant, based on an anonymous tip, was subsequently ruled invalid, and it turned out that state Prohibition agents were routinely conducting searches on slight pretext. Oregon Gov. Walter M. Pierce was untroubled, averring that "time has modified the old adage that every man's home is his castle and sanctuary."

Kenneth Rose concludes that libertarian appeals asserting a right to drink were far less effective in winning repeal of the 18th Amendment than the language of temperance, duty, and home protection.

So far this sounds like business as usual in the war on drugs. But in 1924, people took the sanctity of the home seriously, even in a town as committed to Prohibition as Portland. Wets and drys alike were outraged. The local newspapers, which had long supported Prohibition, unanimously condemned Pierce and the agents who conducted the raid. The city's chief of police and the local district attorney also repudiated Pierce's comments, as did federal Prohibition director J. A. Linville, who said, "A man's home is his castle and we don't deviate from the constitution in that regard in any manner." Sadly, as Baum's account suggests, such a scenario is unlikely today.

Just as they adopted the rhetoric of home protection favored by the Woman's Christian Temperance Union, the wets also claimed the banner of "true temperance." They argued that the concept—which, after all, refers to moderation, not abstinence—had been perverted by the prohibitionists.

There is a lesson here for today's reformers. Baum argues that conservatives confronted by crime, poverty, and social disorder used the war on drugs to switch the focus from "root causes" to individual misbehavior. But what they actually did was switch the focus from people to inanimate objects. They literally demonized psychoactive substances, depicting them as evil spirits that take possession of people and compel them to act in depraved and anti-social ways. This is the very opposite of personal responsibility.

Rose concludes that libertarian appeals asserting a right to drink were far less effective in winning repeal of the 18th Amendment than the language of temperance, duty, and home protection. The trick was to explain how these values would be served better in a country where the government did not try to eliminate temptation. As wives and mothers, Sabin and her allies were especially effective proponents of this view, and one wonders how a similar organization—Mothers Against Prohibition, say—would fare today.

The wets also had an advantage in that their audience was familiar with the drug they proposed to legalize, so the concept of "true temperance" resonated. Today, by contrast, it is difficult for most Americans to picture a society that tolerates opium dens, marijuana bars, or even real Coca-Cola. They cannot imagine the customs, institutions, and social forces that would help tame these exotic substances.

Then again, they can see the sort of corruption, disorder, and violence that so troubled the opponents of Prohibition. They can, perhaps, be made to recognize the misuse of law enforcement resources, the infringement of civil liberties, the unnecessary hazards of black-market drugs. And they certainly should know by now that the hucksters touting a drug-free America, like the millenarians who championed a liquor-free world, have made promises they can't keep.

Jacob Sullum (jsullum@aol.com) is a senior editor of REASON.

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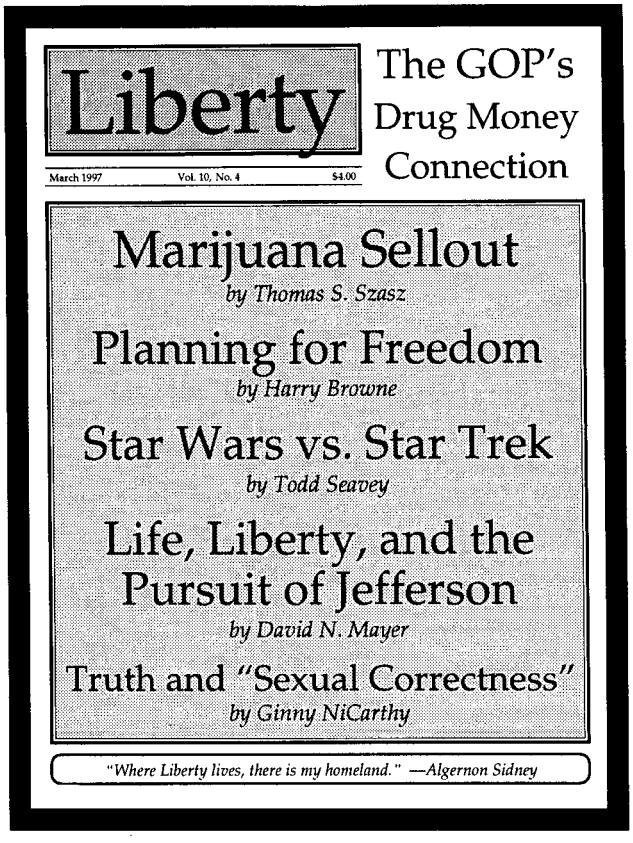
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Volunteering for Duty

Mission creep permeates the Summit for America's Future.

By Thomas W. Hazlett

Dear Gen. Powell:

Your leadership of the president's summit on volunteerism has prompted me to jot a note. While this is not an "official" fan letter, please be assured that I was among those who thought the Republicans were pinheads for not begging you to head their ticket in 1996.

I do not begrudge the fact that your volunteer work is limited to one day a week, leaving the rest for speech making to the tune of $70,000 to $100,000 per appearance. I would be the last person in America to criticize a man for making the most of the honest opportunities before him.

Nor do I question your motives in assuming such a high-profile position, even though cynics note that such publicity maintains your value as a commodity. Since when has a good deed had to be sacrificial to be moral?

The problem, Gen. Powell, is how you define your mission. The summit was not really about solving the problems of at-risk kids. Indeed, you inadvertently let us in on the subtext. "I don't want chairmen and CEOs to give more money," you said. "I really want them to take on the personal commitment." Since the whole point of focusing on CEOs is that they have economic means the rest of us lack, the high-school pep-rally preference for "getting involved" kinda blows the whole deal. The at-risk kids presumably care about the money—not about making senior executives proud of their sacrifice.

No one doubts the good feelings that accompany personal commitment—whether to the Nature Conservancy, Amnesty International, or the Community Preparatory School in Providence, Rhode Island. Indeed, most Americans are doubly lucky in this regard: We have the means to help out, and we can choose from a smorgasbord of voluntary charitable associations. Yet it is mistaken to neatly subdivide our social life into the Worthy and the Greedy.

Charity often turns out to be mostly about people doing well while purporting to do good. Hollywood celebs negotiate cause endorsements for their publicity value; Arianna Huffington trumpets "effective compassion" after blowing $30 million in community property on her husband's U.S. Senate campaign; President Clinton lectures Americans on charitable works even though, as governor of Arkansas, he deducted a couple of bucks for each pair of used undies he sent to Goodwill. The word *temerity* comes to mind.

But the big shots are not alone, as it typically takes some personal payoff to get the charity ball rolling. Out in suburbia, the proliferation of walks, runs, and crawls for this cause or that entails a huge waste of resources: If similar calories were expended in simple money-making endeavors, the cash could be donated directly to breast cancer research or AIDS prevention, and do way more. Sadly, that's what it takes to get people (like me) to participate. The same goes for the traditional charity gala (many of which I attend—and, unlike the president, pay my way to every year): It is considered a success when more than half the gross (after deducting the cost of food and entertainment) goes to the cause. If everyone stayed put and sent the Children's Home their full donation, the kids would reap far more benefit. But without the glittery ball, we'd be a lot less likely to care about the children.

My point, Gen. Powell, is not that this makes social crusaders phony or bad people. Quite the reverse: Human action is inevitably an amalgam of acquisitiveness and high purpose. One fellow may work long hours to pay for his mother's surgery; another may volunteer to organize a church picnic just to meet girls. If we focus too fastidiously on public motives, we tend to forget all about results. Indeed, your summit emitted the faint scent of moral superiority, and you yourself declared that *doing* something was superior to *achieving* something. I am not surprised that the Philadelphia summit—where Al Gore wrestled with Nancy Reagan for mike time—inspired vapid analysis of the sort *Newsweek* headlined: "Can Need Trump Greed?"

The most succinct summit critique was rendered inadvertantly by the Rev. Jesse Jackson. He allowed that it was OK to talk up personal commitments to help out, but admonished that volunteers were never going to "equip classrooms in poor neighborhoods with computers or create decently paid jobs." He's absolutely correct.

The dynamism of unbridled marketplace competition is what it took to *create* the very computer that we want to pop into that poor kid's classroom. The processing power of a football-field-sized Honeywell, circa 1969, is now contained in the $699 desktop Pentium. Relentless profit-seeking has made this capitalist tool astoundingly cheap and available to the multitudes.

Purer motives in the U.S. economy? Not a likely explanation for the opportunities it creates for people, including the poor and downtrodden from so many Third World regimes who hatch ingenious schemes to sneak into America's fields and factories. Can need trump greed? Maybe not on the stage with the balloons and the politicians in Philly, but out in those cold quadrants of the for-profit sector, the needy and the greedy are climbing mountains together. That's the volunteerism that doesn't need a pep rally to start off its day. And it's the victory campaign that a brave old patriot like Colin Powell should be proud to salute.

Sincerely,
Thomas W. Hazlett

Contributing Editor Thomas W. Hazlett (hazlett@primal.ucdavis.edu) teaches economics and public policy at the University of California at Davis.

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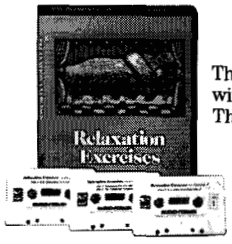

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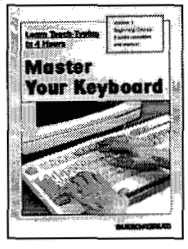

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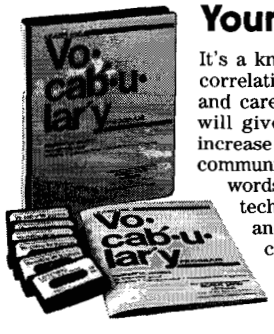

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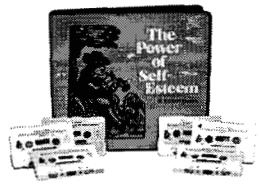

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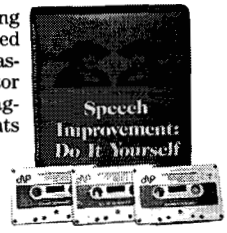

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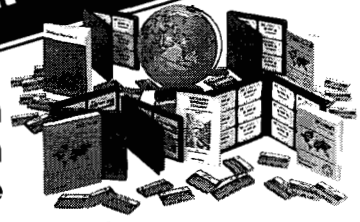

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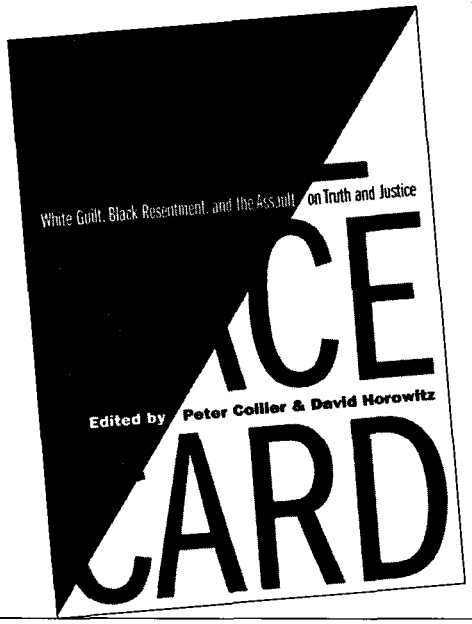

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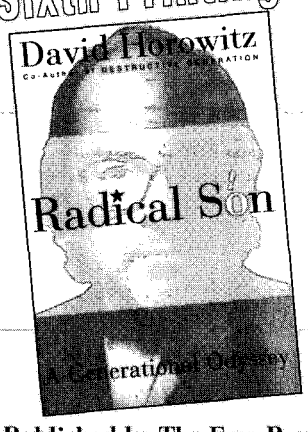

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